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(Hansard)**

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Monday
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Lundi
15 mai 2017

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 May 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 mai 2017

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to introduce five very important people in the gallery. Please welcome Ernie Hardeman, his wife, Susan, and three of my grandchildren: Anika, Freya and Willem.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy lives to come and see your grandfather and your Uncle John.

I'm also very proud to say that they're here today to attend the Dutch flag-raising ceremony, to celebrate our heritage. Welcome to Queen's Park.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: C'est à titre de ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones que j'aimerais accueillir et souhaiter la bienvenue à tous nos organismes de la région de la province de l'Ontario. Bienvenue à Queen's Park aujourd'hui, et merci de votre engagement pour la francophonie en Ontario. Bienvenue.

Mme Gila Martow: Nous avons des invités spéciaux à Queen's Park aujourd'hui pour une journée francophone. Veuillez accueillir le président de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, M. Carol Jolin; le président de l'Hôpital Montfort, le D^r Bernard Leduc; M. Alain Beaudoin, mon ami et président de l'AFRY; et M. Stewart Kiff.

Aussi, des représentants de la Ligue des Africains du Canada : Persévérance Mayer, Hervé Ngamby, Cheikh Ahmed Tidiane Ba, Jean-Marie Vianney, François Musabemungu, Akinbayo Oshuntoye, Jude Gbekou Komi, Elvis Horacio Sodi et Emmanuel Mabondo. Bienvenue à Queen's Park, tout le monde.

Ms. Soo Wong: On behalf of the member from Barrie, I would like to welcome her constituents Simon and Doreen Beekhuizen, who are here today for the Dutch heritage reception. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, one of the classes from my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, from Agincourt Junior Public School, will be arriving very shortly with principal Mr. Robert McKone and teachers Mr. Morteza Abba, Ms. Linda Chung and Ms. Sophia Karkas, who will be joining us here very shortly. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today the Ontario PC candidate for Ottawa-Orléans and a future member of provincial Parliament, Cameron Montgomery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Good morning. I'd like to introduce one of the page captains today, Hayden Cox. He's here with his mother, Irit Hartman, his father, Wayne Cox, sister Jordyn Cox, grandmother Patricia Cox and grandfather Aba Hartman. They're in the members' gallery this morning. Also with him are French teachers Mr. Crimmins and Madame Jang-Naruse, and classmates from Clairlea Public School, located in the riding of Scarborough Southwest. Good morning, and welcome to you all.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Our intern Monica has her mother, Nicole, here today, and her grandparents Lorraine and Wayne Stefanick.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to express a warm welcome to an old friend, Edgardo Sepulveda, who is with us today in the gallery. Welcome.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Today we have proud parents in the Legislative Assembly. I have the parents of my legislative assistant, Brynne Moore. Her parents are here from Ottawa: Debra Darke and Cliff Moore. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We also have another great individual, Manoochehr Ghiasi. He is the father of my chief of staff, Ali Ghiasi. He's here as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to welcome Mayor Allan Alls of the town of Erin, as well as Christine Furlong from Triton Engineering, who are here today. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

M. Gilles Bisson: On aimeraient reconnaître tous les francophones qui sont ici aujourd'hui pour nous parler des questions telles que la ville bilingue d'Ottawa qui doit être en place. De la part de M^{me} Horwath et des néo-démocrates, on dit : bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome the youth and staff from Ontario children's aid societies who are here to celebrate Youth Civics Day at Queen's Park to commemorate children and youth in care. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Todd Smith: Je souhaite la bienvenue au représentants francophones qui sont ici aujourd'hui : d'Ottawa ville bilingue, M^{me} Bernadette Sarazin et M. Lucien Bradet; de TFO, M^{me} Carole Nko et M^{me} Pamela-Jane Taylor; du Club canadien de Toronto, M^{me} Diane Chaperon-Lor; de l'Alliance française de Toronto, M. Thierry Lasserre, M^{me} Patricia Guérin, et M. Christophe Plantiveau; du Centre francophone de Toronto, M^{me} Aissa Nauthoo et M. Félix Corriveau; de l'ACFO Durham-Peterborough, M^{me} Sylvie Landry; du RDÉE Ontario, M^{me} Annick Schulz, M. Denis Laframboise et M. Pierre Tessier; de la radio CHOC FM,

Grand Toronto, M^{me} Zaahirah Atchia; de l'ACÉPO, M. Jean-François L'Heureux et M^{me} Anne Gerson; du Collège Boréal, M. Daniel Giroux, M. Marc Despatie et M^{me} Lise Béland; de l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, M. Jean Lemay; du collège Glendon, M^{me} Solange Belluz; de La Cité collégiale, campus Toronto, M^{me} Judith Charest; du Centre d'information juridique d'Ottawa, M. Paul LeVay; et du RÉFO, M. Endi Kodila.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought it was a francophone filibuster. I wasn't sure about that one.

The member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Essex, Mr. Natyshak, we have guests of page Maddison Rose with us this morning. Maddison's grandmother Jane-Anne Rose and her aunt Meghan Rose are here in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: J'aimerais accueillir à Queen's Park un résident d'Ottawa-Vanier, François Baril.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Marit Stiles, the TDSB trustee for ward 9 in Davenport. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a great pleasure to introduce the guests of page captain Kaitlin Grierson from Toronto Centre: her mother, Catharine Ann Matthews; her father, David Harry Grierson; and her grandmother, Kae Matthews. I would like to welcome them to the House.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to welcome David Moscrop, who is in the members' gallery today. He just finished a PhD in political science at UBC, and his dissertation question was: "Can we make good political decisions?" So I hope we can show him that we can. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

1040

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my great pleasure to welcome Dr. Nasser Kanani, a professor at Berlin university, and Dr. Saeid Nasseri, who's also a professor of mechanical engineering at Berlin university. They are accompanied by Ms. Nahid Milani-Nia and her husband, Mr. Mashoud Nasseri, who are visiting Ontario. Please join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville has given me notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege with respect to the government's advertising of what it has called its fair hydro plan.

Contrary to my preference in these matters, the member from Leeds-Grenville did not copy the other parties on his notice when he filed it, so I am assuring the government House leader and the third party House leader that I will give them the opportunity to provide me with their own submissions on this matter, if they wish.

Now I will hear from the member from Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. Pursuant to standing order 21(c), I wrote to you and I provided a copy of the letter—I'm paraphrasing—to you and the House leader and the third party House leader this morning. So I gave it to them, Speaker.

Thank you for allowing me to present the point of privilege. As you know, Speaker, you ruled back on March 23 on a point of privilege that was tabled by my House leader, the member for Simcoe-Grey, regarding the contempt that we believe is evident from the Minister of Energy concerning recent government advertising and announcements regarding electricity pricing.

In your ruling on March 23, you ruled:

"The statement of the Minister of Energy that he will be introducing legislation at some point, as noted by the member for Simcoe-Grey, does not alter this limitation on my authority or sphere of jurisdiction. It is not open to me to interpret or presume what might be in that possible legislation."

"Consequently, I cannot find that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been established."

Well, now that the Minister of Energy has tabled the legislation in question, I again contest that the minister's actions were a *prima facie* case of contempt by the government running advertisements presupposing the will of this Legislature by outlining a clear timeline and result of the legislation, all of which is available in both my submission, the previous submission from the member for Simcoe-Grey and also the readily available audio.

I want to turn back to the letter that Mr. Wilson did file on March 20, where he cited Speaker Stockwell in a ruling on January 22, 1997. In that letter and in this House, we've used Speaker Stockwell's two-pronged test, but we've also quoted Erskine May in regard to the definition of "contempt" on page 251. I'm going to quote Erskine May now: "Generally speaking, any act of omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions or which obstructs or impedes any member or office of such House in the discharge of his duty or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt...."

In my submission, I also quote page 258 and page 260 of Erskine May with similar comments about how members are obstructed by the actions of this minister.

In my first letter to you, Speaker, and also in Mr. Wilson's letter, Speaker Stockwell had those same exact passages that I just quoted from and referenced those pages on how government advertising was dealt with in his case. The two prongs that Speaker Stockwell laid out—again, the House is sitting for question period; I'm not going to quote them all, but they are provided to you. However, the two prongs laid out by Speaker Stockwell are whether the claims are definite and unqualified and whether they presume an act of the House before the House has had the ability to offer its approval to them, thus relegating our Legislature to a pro forma or inferior body.

In both tests, it appears that the Minister of Energy has committed a *prima facie* case of contempt. The advertisement in question not only definitely states a result of the legislation, which was “25% off your hydro bill,” but also presents an unqualified timeline, which was “starting this summer.” By both committing this House to a result and a timeline, the minister has satisfied the first test of making definite and unqualified claims.

With regard to Speaker Stockwell’s second test on whether the statements relegate this Legislature to a *pro forma* or inferior role in the legislative process, we know the legislation was tabled on Thursday, and the minister held a press conference and described the necessity of this legislation to facilitate the 25% reduction. Further, in my submission to you, sir, I have quoted Hansard from the Minister of Energy, where he confirmed many times, on April 11, April 26 and May 8—in fact, on May 10, the minister said this:

“We are acting as quickly as we can to bring forward a comprehensive piece of legislation that will ensure a 25% reduction by summer—so much so that the OEB, in anticipation of our plan, have brought forward an additional 9%, bringing the reduction right now to 17%....

“By July 1 of this year, if passed through the legislature, we will see an additional 8%, bringing that total, on average, to 25%.”

Additionally, the minister even wrote to members on May 11. He said in that letter, “If the legislation passes, starting this summer Ontario’s Fair Hydro Plan will reduce electricity bills by 25% for a typical residential customer.”

Looking to your ruling back on March 27, you referenced the fact that the legislation wasn’t tabled; now it’s tabled, as of Thursday. I’ve also quoted sections in my letter about the timeliness of my appeal. I’ve also reaffirmed, Speaker, that you affirmed the principle of timeliness in your ruling on May 7.

Finally, Speaker, if you can indulge me one more minute, O’Brien and Bosc affirm the principle on page 143:

“The matter of privilege to be raised in the House must have recently occurred and must call for the immediate action of the House. Therefore, the member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation.”

Speaker, because of your ruling, because of the decision that the government made on Thursday, I’m bringing this matter to the House. I know that it has many of the same categories as the previous case that the member for Simcoe—Grey brought forward in March of this year.

I take this very seriously, sir, as I believe the government should as well, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I rise in response to the question of privilege raised by the member for Leeds—Grenville. This is, Speaker, the official opposition’s second kick at the can, so to speak, against the fair hydro plan. This is yet another distraction from the fact that the Conserva-

tives really don’t have a plan, but instead continue to oppose rate relief proposed under our plan.

With any question of privilege or contempt, there must be a tangible nexus between the impugned behaviour and the alleged contempt of Parliament. On March 23, 2017—the first time you ruled on this question—you effectively laid out a test as to what criteria must be met before a Speaker can make the determination the member seeks. You said:

“For the Speaker to conclude that the communications constitute a *prima facie* contempt of the House because of their definitive, unconditional language, as the member from Simcoe—Grey invites me to do, then I must first have found that contempt exists because the role of the House and the outcome of a future matter before it are both taken for granted and assumed to be a foregone conclusion.” This means that the role of the House and alleged behaviour must be concurrent. They must exist at the same time.

Today, the role of the House is to analyze, debate and possibly propose amendments to Bill 132. The future matter before it is a vote on second reading after debate. The question is, what present or persisting conduct takes the Legislature for granted and assumes the passage of the bill is a foregone conclusion? Respectfully, the Speaker will find he cannot point to any such conduct.

1050

The member for Leeds—Grenville seems to be under the impression that the only difference between the first time his party raised this matter and now is that there is now a bill. I submit to you that the opposition has failed to account for the totality of changed circumstances. First, on the question of hydro rates themselves, they have been dropping since the beginning of this year. The government removed the provincial portion of the HST to cut 8% off hydro bills on January 1, and then the Ontario Energy Board cut rates by 17%, effective May 1. As I stated, Speaker, in the first hearing, the House must allow for flexibility on how policies come to fruition.

Second, the advertisements about which the member complains share no temporal link to Bill 132. Government communications from the point of the bill’s introduction have clearly stated “if passed,” which has been accepted as appropriate deference to the role of the legislators in this House. This is an important change. The government has proactively deferred to the independence of the Legislature, as there is a bill before it. The examples submitted this morning by the member were from back in March, before any bill was before this House. The role of the House was crystallized at the introduction of the bill. Prior to that, there was no role for the Speaker to consider. From the moment the House has had a role, the government’s communications have reflected the required deference.

The government has no desire to take any role of the House for granted, particularly the foundational role of debating and voting on legislation. What the member from Leeds—Grenville asks of you is to associate a previous advertisement with a current bill, when the two have

had no temporal overlap whatsoever. Accordingly, he is asking you to turn a blind eye to government communications released following the introduction of the bill.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —on this matter and seek your leave to make written submissions which will include the updated government communications the member from Leeds—Grenville has failed to discuss.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Regrettably, I make comment of how I was going to say that it was very genuine that everyone was listening carefully to both submissions, until such time as some individuals decided not to.

I thank the members for their submissions. I still offer both the third party and the government an opportunity—a little bit—in order for submissions to be made, if they so desire. I will take these under consideration and reserve my ruling for later on.

I thank the member from Leeds—Grenville.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Last week, we revealed a leaked cabinet document showing that skyrocketing hydro prices were going to be back to normal in Ontario. Hydro bills will hit a record high in 2024 and then, in 2028, the average bill will hit well over \$200. Those families already faced with a ridiculously high hydro bill will see it jump another 6.5%, and 10.5% in 2028. Hydro rates will be higher than they've ever been before.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government refuse to actually fix the structural problems in hydro? It's about time they actually act on hydro, not simply a farce.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite knows that he's referring to a document that is out of date. It's a document that was part of the deliberation as we developed our fair hydro plan.

The reality is, as a plan is developed, and it may be—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville will come to order. And by the sounds of it, I may have to move to warnings, and I will do so real quick if called upon.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As a plan is developed, there is much input and there are many iterations of options and information that come forward in the development of a plan. We want an Ontario with an even playing field. Our fair hydro plan is about moving in that

direction, creating a fairer Ontario where people have the opportunity—all Ontarians—to achieve equally. Taking 25% off all the electricity bills of residents in this province, from their residential bill, that is the fair thing to do and that's what our plan will do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier's defence is that the document was out of date? We're talking about just a few months ago; 2017 is out of date? The only thing out of date is this government in how out of touch they are with the population of Ontario.

The Liberal press secretary called these leaked cabinet documents on energy “false and inaccurate.” Now the new speaking point is “out of date.” The Minister of Energy said he has seen thousands of graphs so he couldn't comment on the leaked cabinet document.

Well, if he can't comment on that recent document, will the Premier pledge here today to show us a graph, a recent graph, that will actually show hydro rates going down? That would be wonderful, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: A document can be false and out of date at the same time because it is not the document on which our plan is built; it was part of the process of developing our plan.

When I talk about a fairer Ontario, I talk about an Ontario where people have the opportunity to live out their dreams. We recognize that we have wonderful institutions in this province: We have a wonderful health care system; we have a wonderful publicly funded education system. They are strong. They have been built up over the last number of years, and we intend to keep them that way. But there are people in this province—even though our economy is doing very well, there are people who are not sharing in that.

Our budget is about addressing those concerns. We recognize that it is the first balanced budget in nearly a decade in Ontario. We have the opportunity now to invest in people and make sure that that playing field is more level.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: My question was, given that the recent cabinet document says that hydro rates are going to go out of control again—and that's their graph—will the Premier commit to showing a new document that shows hydro rates actually going down?

This fair hydro plan is a borrowing plan: It kicks the can down the road. It does nothing on reigning in executive salaries. It does nothing on these bad contracts. It does nothing on the water power we're spilling every day. It does nothing on the hydro we're giving for free to Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York. It's not a plan; it's a re-election gimmick.

When will the Premier actually show us a hydro plan with hydro rates going down?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise to show the official opposition leader a plan on how to reduce rates, if passed, by 25%. I know he doesn't have a plan, so what they want to do is stand up and complain. But, you know what, Mr. Speaker? We made sure that we looked after families, farms—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We looked after families, farms and 500,000 small businesses right across the province. Again, it just shows that the party opposite has no idea what to do on the energy file and has no plan, because all they have to do is to look at the 2010 long-term energy plan and the 2013 long-term energy plan. You know what? We have a plan coming forward in 2017 that will continue to show that prices will continue to be lower, unlike that party—no idea on how to work for electricity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1100

HYDRO RATES

TARIFS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The government has a fictional 25% band-aid solution. Their hydro scheme doesn't help struggling families; it's all about helping a party with struggling polling numbers.

Now, the reality is that under this leaked cabinet document, it says very clearly that because of their hydro plan, there will be a temporary 25% decrease, but it will be matched—now this is as reported in the CBC, from the Liberal cabinet document—by a 61% increase after the next election. So get a temporary decrease and then it skyrockets 61%. People can't afford their hydro bills right now in Ontario and they put forward a plan that's going to have hydro rates go up 61%?

Mr. Speaker, it's unbelievable. When will this Premier actually act on solving the structural problems at hydro?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is not to be believed because the Leader of the Opposition is using a document that was given to the CBC but is out of date. It was not the document on which the plan was built.

Let's just deal in the facts.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The facts are, Mr. Speaker, that the document that the Leader of the Opposition is referencing is not the document on which our plan was built. Our plan will reduce people's bills across the province by 25%. We were very, very clear that we were asking right now—this generation—to pay costs of investments that have been made in our electricity system to upgrade it because it had been neglected, and that those costs needed to be spread over a longer period of time. That's what we're doing. That's how people will receive a reduction.

We talked about this plan for some time. We came up with it and it will reduce people's bills by 25%.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The government simply can't come clean. There is a recent Liberal cabinet document—I realize they're frustrated that there are now whistle-blowers exposing this government, but their numbers do not add up. Their plan doesn't help Ontarians. It's a temporary decrease for a massive increase. Even the Minister of Energy said the fair hydro plan "will cost more and it will take us longer to pay off." Thank you for that assessment.

But the reality is, how much more is it going to cost Ontarians? Because every time this government touches hydro, they make it worse. And with projections of it going up 61%, that gives Ontarians a heart attack.

They say this document is outdated because it is a few weeks or a few months old. My question is this: If you're saying that graph is not accurate, will you release the most recent graph, and show Ontarians that you don't have a plan to skyrocket hydro rates?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know the leader of the official opposition is having a very hard time understanding how a plan works and how a plan evolves because they don't build plans. They wait for a magic weekend in November to actually devise plans for the entire province.

On this side of the House, we've been working hard for the last six months on making sure that we can deliver real relief for families in this province, and in the short term they will see a 25% reduction, if this bill passes, on average.

As we move past, for the next four years we are holding these costs to inflation to make sure that families have predictability—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds-Grenville, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, we're holding it to the cost of inflation for the next four years. After that, we will continue to find ways to pull costs out of the system to ensure that we can keep rates as low as possible.

I know they're waiting for their magic weekend to make things magically appear. We're acting now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

M. Patrick Brown: Encore à la première ministre : encore une fois, les gens méritent de savoir la vérité. Si le document qui a été éculé n'est pas exact, quels sont les vrais chiffres? Comment vite est-ce que les frais vont augmenter? Combien de plus est-ce que les familles vont payer?

L'hon. Glenn Thibeault: Le gouvernement ici travaille fort pour réduire les prix pour les gens en Ontario de 25 %. Pour le gouvernement maintenant, c'est très important à changer, parce que le parti opposé n'a

pas changé une fois—pas une fois—pour tous les gens dans la province.

But this government, we're making sure we're acting and we're bringing forward legislation that, if passed, will make sure that we see a 25% reduction.

Mais toute l'opposition oublie les gens dans la province du milieu rural.

Some 800,000 rural families will see reductions between 40% to 50%. There's absolutely no idea on how to deal with that on that side of the House. We're acting, making sure we're addressing all of them.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Thanks to documents leaked by a whistle-blower last week, we now know for sure that hydro rates will soar as a result of the Liberal government's hydro scheme. And what's worse is that these documents prove that the Premier knows it too.

Can the Premier explain why she is so clearly putting her desire to get re-elected ahead of the well-being of Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the document to which the leader of the third party refers is a document that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, second time. If it happens again, I'll name him.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —is a document that was not used to establish our plan.

In the development of a plan, there are many options that are put forward. There's modelling that is done. Our plan was built to reduce people's bills by 25% across the province and to keep those bills down in the immediate term. In the mid-term and in the long term, we will develop a long-term energy plan that will continue to take costs out of the system.

Our fair hydro plan was designed to meet the needs of residents across this province. They're already seeing those initial reductions. By summer, they will see a 25% reduction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is the height of arrogance. Ontario families who are struggling under the crushing weight of the damage that this Premier has done to our hydro system are frustrated, and rightfully so. For two months, the Premier bragged about her hydro plan, not once telling Ontarians that it will actually make their bills go up.

How can this Premier justify this disgusting betrayal of Ontarians?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We've been saying all along that we had to clean up our electricity system. One of the things that we did was remove coal. We talked to many families, and in one family in particular there was a young man named Matthew. We talk about crushing weight: This young man had asthma so bad, he couldn't go outside and play. Because of the investments that we made, that this government made by eliminating coal, he hasn't had to visit the hospital in one year. That is a very positive thing.

When you think about the investments that we've made, we know they came with a cost. What we've done is we've brought forward a plan. We worked with stakeholders, we worked with the community, we worked with everyone involved in this sector to come up with a plan to reduce bills by 25% on average, if we can get this legislation passed.

We want to see this relief for families as soon as possible. We want to ensure that we help families—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton, come to order.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has prioritized her party and her high-powered friends at every opportunity. She has sold the majority stake in Hydro One against the wishes of 80% of Ontario families, and her borrowing scheme will end up costing these same families more on their already skyrocketing hydro bills.

But do you know who benefits, Speaker? Bay Street bankers and Liberal insiders. That's who benefits from 14 years of Liberal government in the province of Ontario. When will this Premier do her job and look out for regular Ontario families instead of those who are already at the top?

1110

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Because of the Ontario fair hydro plan, if it passes, 25% on average will be the reduction for every family in this province; 800,000 families in rural Ontario and in northern Ontario will see a 40% to 50% reduction; and low-income individuals and First Nations individuals will see significant relief, if this legislation passes.

I know they can only add a very small line on the last page of their 13-page document, but we're making sure that we're bringing an additional 50% on the Ontario Electricity Support Program for the most vulnerable.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that they don't like seeing infrastructure and jobs being created in this province, but that's what we're doing. When we make \$2.8 billion on the sale of Hydro One, surpassing our goal of \$9 billion, we're creating jobs, we're making sure that we're building our province up and, at the same time, reducing electricity rates.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The leaked documents show that hydro bills

in Ontario will rise by over 50%, if the Premier's borrowing scheme is passed into law. Given that this plan will actually increase people's hydro bills and given that the Premier is not disclosing all the facts, we have called on an independent review of the legislation by the Financial Accountability Officer for the province of Ontario.

Will this Premier co-operate with the FAO so that the public has the full truth, the unbiased facts, about her \$40-billion borrowing scheme?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have, and we always will, work with the Financial Accountability Officer, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we have a very good working relationship and have expanded his authority recently. We will, of course, work with the Financial Accountability Officer.

But the plan that we brought forward, which is not based on the document that the leader of the third party is talking about—that document was part of the development of the plan, but it was not used in the final analysis of the plan that we brought forward. Our plan is designed to reduce people's electricity bills, because we had to make investments in the electricity system in this province. The fact is that the shutting down of the coal-fired plants, the rebuilding of lines across the province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —the development of clean renewable electricity in this province has meant that there was a cost associated with that. We are spreading that cost out over a longer period of time, making structural changes to reduce people's electricity bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we asked the Premier months ago—in fact two months ago today—not to ram this bill through the House. Bringing this bill in at the last minute, especially now that we know how much damage it's going to do to Ontario families, is absolutely undemocratic. Shutting down the public's right to review this bill is not how a government with integrity should work.

Will this Premier at least allow the FAO to conduct his assessment on the long-term impact of this borrowing scheme and direct her minister to release all documents—every single document—that they relied on to put this scheme together, to the FAO—and do it immediately?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: As the Premier said, we welcome and encourage the FAO to review our fair hydro plan. The FAO already received a full technical briefing last month, and we've responded to all follow-up requests for information. Remember, Mr. Speaker, that it was this government that created the FAO, and we expanded its authority and oversight again last fall.

But what's disappointing is that the NDP knows all of this, and yet, they try to distract from the legislation we have tabled. We've been clear all along: Our plan is spreading out the costs over time and over our system, but it will reduce the burden on ratepayers today and it will share costs more evenly with future generations, who

will also benefit from our investment. But the NDP doesn't seem to want to provide relief to ratepayers. They don't support our plan to reduce bills by 25%, if passed, and they have no credible ideas to replace it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is nothing more than a new gas plant scandal, except that this time, it's going to cost families 40 times more than the \$1 billion it cost them for the Liberals to buy that election. Everything seems to go up under the Liberals, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw, Speaker.

Everything seems to go up under this Liberal government, including the cost of an election.

How can the Premier ram this legislation through this House without sufficient time for debate, public input, and without an assessment from the FAO?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Let's talk about what's been going up. Highways and bridges have been built and are being created, creating jobs, thanks to the Minister of Economic Development and the work by this Premier—going up, Mr. Speaker. We're making sure that schools are going up. Hospitals, programs that go in those hospitals: going up. Thanks to the leadership of this Premier and this government, our province is being built up right across this province.

You know what's going down, Mr. Speaker? If we get this legislation passed, 25% of everyone's hydro bills across this province; 800,000 families will see a 40% to 50% reduction in their hydro bills. And for our low-income individuals: a 50% reduction when they actually get on to the OESP program.

Let's not forget that our First Nations individuals are going to see their delivery charge eliminated. But it's quite upsetting that either opposition party doesn't think that it's important enough to vote on, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. To the minister, Speaker: At what point was the minister going to inform the people of Ontario that he was bringing back the debt retirement charge at four times the cost that it was when it was removed from bills last time?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I believe the opposition member knows that the debt retirement charge comes from when the original Ontario Hydro corporation was dismantled, and then the hidden debt—we had to find a way to pay for that, Mr. Speaker. I know that's something that his party was involved in, and I know that's something that he probably is well aware of.

But when it comes to making sure that he's looking at the fair hydro plan, I hope he can get an understanding of

how to do a plan, because I know they have this magic weekend planned in November where they think they can come up with a plan. So one of the things that will happen—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton, second time.

Finish. Wrap up, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I was talking about the weekend. When you do a plan, Mr. Speaker, you just don't go with the first one that you get. What you should be doing is reviewing it and making it better and better. Hopefully they can use that advice—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, the minister didn't answer the question yet again, but what he's doing is bringing back the debt retirement charge. It's going to be \$22 a month, which is four to five times larger than the old debt retirement charge, only he's calling it something else. He can call it whatever he wants, but it's going to be a big hit on the pocketbooks of the people of Ontario, particularly electricity customers.

The fact is it's not just going to pay for energy costs, though, Speaker. The minister gets pretty wide latitude in his bill to include whatever he deems necessary in this new charge. How much of the new debt retirement charge will be going to pay interest or fees and commissions to bankers and bond traders as part of the government's latest debt retirement charge on steroids?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know that they can project without actually doing any work, or have any plan into that, Mr. Speaker. We've been working with the system operator, with the Ontario Energy Board, with all of our utilities right across the province.

Let's talk about the 2017 long-term energy plan that actually projects where our costs are going to go. The 2010 long-term energy plan predicted that costs today should be \$178. We took costs out of the system, Mr. Speaker: \$3.5 billion from renewing the Samsung agreement. Then the 2013 long-term energy plan—its average was \$170 today—pulled more costs out of the system. The average today is 156 bucks.

When we get this plan passed through this House—if we can pass it with their support—we will see an additional 25% reduction coming, making sure that costs are low for the next four years and continue moving forward into the future.

1120

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Thanks to the Premier and her privatization of hydro, people's hydro bills are already sky-high. Now we learn that the Premier plans to ram through legislation that will drive them even higher. Families are struggling. Businesses are struggling.

Why doesn't the Premier get that people can't take any more of her hydro hikes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know I've talked about this in the past, but the criticism of the NDP's obsession with Hydro One doesn't just seem to revolve around that side. Tim Kiladze of the *Globe and Mail* calls the belief that ownership of utilities in Ontario affects rates one of the biggest misconceptions about electricity. Martin Regg Cohn agrees, writing "Hydro One can only charge what the OEB deems reasonable."

Obviously, they don't get how rates work, Mr. Speaker. The Ontario Energy Board will set the rates, not Hydro One. When we're looking at a plan that is reducing rates by 25%, the only thing that they had, when talking about a 5% reduction, was a conversation with the federal government. Well, I believe, they're sending the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton to actually have that conversation there tonight. Maybe he can start having that, and add something to their plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: What the minister was talking about, this borrowing scheme, is a \$40-billion plan to avoid the Liberals losing the next election. That's why that \$40 billion is being spent. It will make life harder for families and businesses that are suffering under already sky-high hydro rates.

Is the Premier so desperate to win that she plans to pass this bill at the last minute, knowing that it will end up costing Ontarians more on their hydro bills?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I know the honourable member is talking about our plan and the costs that are projected out to 2027. Well, that means that we'll be in government by then, Mr. Speaker, for 24 years, making sure that we can continue to find ways to pull costs out of the system. We've done that over and over again on a consistent basis. We have found ways to pull out \$3.5 billion by renegotiating the Samsung agreement, taking \$1 billion out of the FIT price contract. We also suspended the LRP II contract, which also reduced billions of dollars from the system.

So when looking at what we're doing as a government, we continue to find ways to reduce costs out of the system and, if passed, a 25% reduction is coming for all families, small businesses and farms in this province—once we can get this legislation passed through this House.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Across eastern and central Ontario, communities, families and municipalities are working to repair the damage caused by recent flooding. It is clearly a very difficult situation, and I know that the thoughts of every member of this House are with them.

Last week, I was able to join the Premier, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell in Cumberland as they visited communities along the Ottawa River, and I know that the minister was in Minden Hills and saw these efforts first-hand.

Many of our MPPs have been working with their constituents to ensure they're getting the help that they need. I know the member from Ottawa Centre was in the Westboro Beach area. I saw the member from Nepean-Carleton at Constance Bay, bagging sand.

Could the minister please elaborate on our government's efforts to respond to these flooding events?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question, and I want to thank our first responders, our municipal leaders, residents and volunteers for their efforts in response to this crisis.

On Friday, May 5, ministry staff reached out to all eastern and central municipalities to ensure they had a point of contact with us and had information about our relief programs. The Premier, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and I have seen the hard work people are doing locally to respond to the floods. I know a number of MPPs, including the member for Ottawa South, have been on the ground working with constituents, as well.

Speaker, we want to assure and reassure residents that we're working closely with our municipal partners to activate the program where it will be needed. Last Friday, I activated the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians Program for areas in central and eastern Ontario, including areas along the Ottawa River, Renfrew county and Minden Hills, where I met with Mayor Devolin and council and staff. I look forward to providing a bit more detail in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the minister for his answer. I understand that the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians Program, or the DRAO Program, is a new program which was introduced in 2015 to be faster and more responsive to the needs of people in the province. It helps victims of natural disasters get back on their feet by offering financial assistance for emergency expenses and for repairing or replacing essential property.

The program is activated when a sudden and unexpected natural disaster causes costly and widespread damage. It has been activated in the areas that you mention, Minister, and residents can apply to receive assistance through this program. But for the members of this House and for those watching who have experienced some flooding damage, would the minister elaborate on how the DRAO Program works?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, thanks to the member. I want to note that there are still a number of areas under assessment by staff. When those assessments are completed, a recommendation will be made to me about whether or not to activate the program in additional areas.

The DRAO is a new program introduced in 2015, designed after much consultation. No fundraising, Speaker—a major change in the new program—no fundraising is required on the ground. The program can now be activated much quicker—within days or weeks—as opposed to a number of months, which sometimes could have been the case under the previous program; great advancements on the program.

This is a program, Speaker, I will reiterate, that's not a replacement for insurance. It provides financial assistance for essential property in a resident's primary home. Some things like cottages or finished basements are generally not covered, but essentials are. We're there on the ground trying to provide help for people.

I encourage anyone who has experienced flooding to take photos of the damage and keep receipts and records of any communication with your broker. Go online if you're unsure. Feel free to call in. We're there to help.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Just before noon today, the government will call for a vote on the budget bill, even though most of the members on our side haven't spoken to this bill yet. In fact, only three of us have given a speech on it.

If this bill passes, it will be sent to committee at 1 o'clock today. There will be less than one hour's notice to the public to scramble here to Queen's Park and make a presentation on this budget. They can't come tomorrow, Speaker; it's all over at 7 o'clock tonight. That's what this government calls being open and transparent: one hour's notice; in and out in the same day.

I ask the Premier: Why is this debate about your budget 24 days shorter than normal budgets?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the question the member is asking, given the fact that it's his party and his caucus who have been delaying the work of this assembly in dealing with a very important bill.

This is a piece of legislation that will, if passed, provide historic investments in our health care system and create the OHIP+ pharmacare program—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This bill, if passed, will create the OHIP+ pharmacare program, providing children and youth with free access to over 4,400 prescription medications. I have not yet once heard from members opposite as to what their plan is going to be when it comes to providing universal pharmacare for our children and youth.

The party opposite is only interested in one thing and one thing only, and that is to delay the passage of this important bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: The government doesn't want the people of Ontario to have a chance to discuss this budget. This fits right in with what the Financial Accountability Officer said. He told us that there's a "broader pattern" of secrecy, and it's all because of political direction. He went so far as to say, "It is highly disappointing that instead of looking to maximize the information" provided, "the government is focusing on how it can restrict disclosure of information." He

finishes with, "They are impeding the ability of MPPs to perform their constitutional duties of holding the government to account."

I ask the Premier: Why the rush? Why don't you want us to see what's in this budget? What are you hiding?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

1130

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let me be really, really clear as to what's going on here. We are working with the Financial Accountability Officer. He has been given much more power in order to initiate his recommendations. We work closely with him, contrary to what the member is saying.

And contrary to what the member is saying, they are now providing delay tactics to one of the most progressive budgets in history, one that is a balanced budget in our economy, one that provides for the people of Ontario, one that is providing medicines for our young people, with free tuition coming this fall, and enabling our economy to grow. They are opposing the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

New question?

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Last month, more than 100 people attended a hydro town hall in my riding of London West. They shared the anxiety they felt every time they open their hydro bills. They shared their fears for the future of their children and grandchildren because of the \$40-billion hydro debt the Liberals are passing along.

Many at the town hall, like Steve Everett and his wife, were seniors living on fixed incomes, who have been hit hard by soaring hydro bills. Since the Everetts' rent doesn't include electricity, they are doing everything they possibly can to cut back their usage. They do their laundry off-peak and only turn the lights on when absolutely necessary. Over the winter, they even shut off their electric heat, using blankets and a ceramic heater instead, and dressing in layers to keep warm, but still they faced hydro bills of \$200 a month on top of their \$800 monthly rent.

Speaker, why is the Premier planning to implement a scheme that will jack up hydro rates even higher than they are now?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I hope that the member, in her town hall, had the opportunity to tell this family particularly about the fact that they will see their electricity bill come down by, on average, 25% if the legislation passes. I hope that she also had the opportunity to make sure that they are signed up for the Ontario

Electricity Support Program, so that they would be able to benefit from a further reduction.

I hope that the member also made it clear that we are moving to put rent control in place. I don't know what date the building that they live in was built, but I hope that she assured the group that we are moving to put rent control in place for all private rentals across the province. I hope she made sure that they got all of that information at the town hall.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Premier: It's not only renters who are being affected by the Liberal government's hydro fiasco; London homeowners are also starting to worry that they will lose their homes. Kurt and Phyllis Gopaul from London are seniors who live on fixed monthly incomes of \$1,475. Their hydro and gas bills are eating up more than \$400 a month, almost one third of their monthly income. They applied for the OESP, but they were told they don't qualify. They are worried that skyrocketing energy bills will make it impossible for them to afford their bills, and force them to have to give up their home.

Instead of a \$40-billion borrowing scheme that will cause hydro bills to soar, will the Premier listen to the concerns raised by Londoners? Will she reverse the privatization of Hydro One and bring down hydro rates once and for all?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: A few things in relation to the honourable member's question: If passed, the Ontario fair hydro plan will reduce that senior couple's bill by 25%. One of the other things that the Ontario fair hydro plan did is that it enhanced the Ontario Electricity Support Program, so more people can qualify for that program. Right now, 192,000 families qualify for this program. We want more families on this, specifically seniors. They can see another \$580 reduced on top of their bill when it comes to the 25%. That's significant when you put those two together.

When you're looking at making sure that this relief is sustainable for the next four years, that relief is staying at the cost of inflation, and we will ensure it stays as low as possible moving forward.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Labour. We continue to hear more and more about precarious work and the nature of changing jobs in Ontario. In today's workplace, people are no longer working 9 to 5, Monday through Friday, with weekends off. It's common for people to be self-employed or have part-time work or temporary work. As a government, we need to make certain that we're doing all we can to provide support for these changing conditions.

I can tell you that in my riding of Kitchener Centre, I heard that kind of feedback at a recent forum where we gathered to discuss the issue of poverty. Businesses and workers want our laws to reflect the realities of our modern economy.

When the minister announced the Changing Workplaces Review, it was very encouraging to hear that we're taking this issue very seriously. Could the minister please tell us more on the Changing Workplaces Review?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for the question. I'm really happy to stand in the House today to speak on this really important issue, because we all know that the world of work is changing. We're facing the challenges that it presents head on by doing the Changing Workplaces Review.

We started this important conversation over two years ago. We've talked to poverty advocates, organized labour and business. We've talked to hard-working people in Ontario. What we found is that precarious work is on the rise, and we need to address it. Fundamental changes are needed. We want to reward those successful employers in Ontario who are committed to fair, productive and respectful workplaces by levelling the playing field so that certain employers can no longer get ahead simply by taking advantage of vulnerable workers.

The advisers have submitted their final report and recommendations. I'm considering them. I look forward to sharing them very, very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the minister for his answer. I know that we're all looking forward to that report. As the minister said before, the Changing Workplaces Review is a very important opportunity to make certain that we provide protection for workers and that we help businesses in our province to prosper.

When you look at the overarching stats, there's lots to be proud of. We have one of the lowest unemployment rates in Canada. Our growth here in Ontario is outstripping all G7 nations.

But not everyone is sharing in the benefits of our current strong economy. Action is needed to see that no one is left behind. In my riding of Kitchener Centre, people are working hard each and every day, and we're looking forward to how the Changing Workplaces Review is going to make everyday lives that much better. Could the minister please tell us more on what we can expect to see in the upcoming release of this report?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that question again. I also want to thank her for her own involvement in this and the interest in this important review that she has shown.

What's clear to me and to the government after reading the report is responsible change—if we make the right decisions here, we can ensure that every hard-working Ontarian has a chance to reach their full potential, and that's what we need. The majority of employers in Ontario treat their employees well, but there's still a growing number of hard-working Ontarians whose rights are being violated. That tradition of decency that has been the hallmark of Ontario workplaces I think is being eroded at the expense of those good Ontario employers who play by the rules and understand the value of respect and dignity. That needs to change. No person in Ontario should be made to feel unappreciated or undervalued. No

one should ever feel like they can't get ahead. We aim to change that.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Ted Arnott: Our next question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. We all know that life just keeps getting harder for the people of Ontario under this Liberal government, and we all know of their reputation for scandal, waste and mismanagement, but now we learn that they're setting up the Ontario Climate Change Solutions Deployment Corp. How is this new agency not redundant? How much is it going to cost to administer? Does it overlap with other existing ministry functions and programs? Why do we need it? Will the minister commit to this House that this new agency will not become just another Liberal slush fund?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I always find it entertaining getting questions from the party that managed to double hydro rates.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey, it's time.

Carry on.

1140

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They managed to double hydro rates in one summer in—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right, we'll play that game. The member from Kitchener—Conestoga, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's very kind. They managed to double hydro rates in one summer. Talking to us about costs is a little amusing.

The green Ontario corporation operates very much like its counterpart in Quebec, which has been hugely successful. It will deploy billions of dollars into home heating retrofits, reducing the energy and heating costs of Ontarians and cutting the costs to businesses. In the supplementary, I can already give you a list of people who are doing that. It works very much on the model of OCWA as a very highly—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, come to order.

You have one wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It will continue in that tradition, Mr. Speaker. There are many good models around the world. It's a much more efficient system for delivering programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Perth—Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Let the minister be further amused, then.

The government wants to stuff the board of directors of this climate change agency with green energy insiders and lobbyists. Of course, under the Liberals' terrible long-term hydro contracts, many green energy firms have

already cashed in big-time. The result? Amongst the highest hydro rates in North America. Now they're appointing insiders and lobbyists to spend cap-and-trade tax money on Liberal vanity projects instead of putting the money back in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians.

We need the minister's personal guarantee. Will he tell us that his green energy friends will see no personal or commercial benefits from this boondoggle in the making?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Oh, Mr. Speaker, this is so very simple. People go and retrofit their homes. When they retrofit their homes, they buy a high-efficiency furnace or a geothermal system, and this corporation gives them a grant to help with the cost of that. This corporation helps them sort out what is the most—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Lanark, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think you and I are having a good aerobic workout this morning.

The opposition in lieu of this would cut \$8 billion of subsidies to Ontario families and businesses to help them reduce GHGs, and they would increase the cost of carbon reduction per tonne by 400%.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. The upcoming May 24 weekend, otherwise known as the May Run weekend, is a rite of passage in northern Ontario. Camping is a big part of our culture in the north. There are many beautiful places, but one of the most beautiful places is the River Valley park, close to River Valley.

Tony deBoer and his family have owned and operated this park for years, but they are being squeezed by hydro costs. This year, for the same amount of power, their costs went up by \$2,400.

Why has this government ignored the plight of struggling small businesses like Tony's in River Valley Park?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Not knowing the specifics of the small business that the honourable member is talking about, the one good news item that I can say to him is to tell those constituents that the Ontario fair hydro plan, if passed, will bring forward a 25% reduction for all 500,000 small businesses right across our province.

Then, of course, there are folks who live in the rural or remote parts of northern Ontario—and he is right: The River Valley area and throughout northeastern Ontario are beautiful parts of our province. These families are going to see a 40% to 50% reduction on their electricity bills.

That's all thanks to us bringing forward the RRRP, the rural or remote rate protection plan. We've increased that. We've increased that from \$20 to \$60 to \$135 on average for a Hydro One R2 customer. That is significant relief on top of the 25% reduction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: Again to the Premier: River Valley park is a place where northern families have come for years to relax and enjoy nature, and they're also struggling to pay their own hydro bills. I guess the question they all want to ask is: How much is their power going to go up after the “fix” for the next election? How much is it going to go up after—after—the four years? How much is their power going up? You should know, Minister. How much is their power going up?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Well, it's going down by 25% if we can get the opposition to actually vote in favour of this.

Those families that are in his area—I know that the Minister of Agriculture was just up there talking about some great work that we're doing. In talks about agriculture in that part of our great province, they were talking about the 40% to 50% reduction that they're going to see on top of that.

We've got the 2017 long-term energy plan that is going to come out in the very near future, projecting where energy costs and electricity costs are going to go. But, rest assured, we are going to continue to do everything we can to pull costs out of the system. We've got market renewal happening; we've got market reform; we've got a capacity option. All of these things, all of these items, will continue to take costs out of the system because we have a plan that will work for all families, no matter where they live in our great province.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Peter Z. Mileczyn: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. In June 2014, when Ontarians elected our government, they gave us a clear mandate: to deliver on infrastructure projects that Ontarians are both depending on and deserve. From hospitals to transit, we're fully committed to doing just that, and, as our balanced 2017 budget demonstrates, we're reinforcing that commitment.

I know that many of our infrastructure projects are complex and often require solutions that are both creative and prudent to get the job done. To that effect, I am aware that the minister made an announcement recently about how to ensure that critical projects are going to be delivered on time. Would the minister please elaborate on what exactly that plan is and why it's so important?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore for his question. As minister, I take my job to create an integrated transit network for this region very seriously because I understand that the people of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area rely on a transportation network that works for them and for their families.

Projects like the Eglinton Crosstown, a \$5.3-billion project, the single largest public transit project in Ontario's history, will transform the way the people of this region literally move themselves and their loved ones around the region.

On Friday I announced Metrolinx's strong plan to ensure that we deliver successfully on the Eglinton Crosstown, as promised, by 2021. Our plan means purchasing 61 light rail vehicles from Alstom Canada, a company that is already making and delivering quality 100% low-floor vehicles for the Ottawa LRT. Seventeen of the vehicles from this contract will be used on the Finch West LRT, another critical transit project which will be in service in December 2021.

I look forward to providing more details in the follow-up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Mileczyn: I want to thank the minister for that answer. I'm pleased to hear that Metrolinx has a strong plan in place to make sure we deliver on our transit commitments. I know that in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore the Kipling Mobility Hub, which the minister announced just last month, is one example of a project that's moving forward and will transform my community. It's absolutely critical that this project and others open on time.

I've heard some questions since the minister made his announcement on Friday, and those questions are: Why now and why Alstom? They want to make sure that Ontarians are getting the best deal for these vehicles and that they can depend on Alstom to deliver. So, Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister please provide some clarity on why Metrolinx is taking this step now, and how they will ensure that Alstom delivers?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for the follow-up question. They are valid concerns, and I'm happy to have the opportunity to follow up.

Regardless of the outcome of what's known as the dispute resolution process with Bombardier, a process that we know could take up to one year, our agreement with Alstom will help to ensure that we have vehicles ready in time for the crosstown, which, I mentioned, will enter into service in 2021. If Bombardier is found not to be in default of the contract and can successfully deliver, these vehicles—the vehicles that we purchased from Alstom—will still be used; however, they'll be used on the Hurontario LRT in Mississauga and southern Brampton. This is both a responsible and creative solution that puts Ontarians first, both commuters and taxpayers.

1150

As I said in my previous answer, we already know that Alstom can deliver a quality vehicle on time because it's exactly what they're doing for the Ottawa LRT. We truly believe that this is a path forward that provides both Metrolinx and the people of this region with the assurance that critical transit will be delivered on time, as our Premier and our government have promised.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I've received information about additional breaches of confidential health information, this time from the Markham region. A concerned

father reached out to my office to inform me that, upon receiving his children's health card renewal forms, he noticed something terribly wrong. A father of twins, a boy and a girl, recently received their health card renewals. The girl's information was right; the boy's information contained the wrong name, address, date of birth and health card number—obviously from another child in this province.

This problem is widespread and serious. When front-line workers breach the confidentiality of private records, they face either fines or loss of employment. Would the minister tell the House how many people have lost their jobs over this confidentiality breach?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I was deeply concerned to learn about this privacy breach because I take the privacy of Ontarians' information very, very seriously. Unfortunately, some Ontario residents may have received notices containing information about another person's privacy information. It is very important to note, though, that the health card version code was not provided on the form that was sent out. That information, the health card version code, is essential to accessing OHIP services.

I've been working very actively with ServiceOntario to get to the bottom of this. Actions are being taken to fix this issue and resume the mailing of renewal notices as soon as possible. Of course, the privacy commissioner was informed, letters have been sent out to families, and many corrected forms have since been returned.

I will add more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: This breach of confidential health information seems to not be a priority for this government, obviously, when the Minister of Health won't even respond to the question.

This government has brought forth Bill 119, Bill 41 and now Bill 87 to give this government more access to Ontarians' personal health information. How can Ontarians trust this government to keep this information confidential when it can't even get the basics right?

Ontarians have lost confidence that this government has the ability to protect private information. Will the minister himself take personal responsibility for this breach of privacy?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to assure the member opposite that both the Minister of Health and I take this very seriously. It's important to note that this is a printing error that occurred—a printing error in a batch of 50,000 renewal notices that go out every week, in the context of over 51 million transactions that go out from ServiceOntario every year.

I do take it seriously. We have set up a 1-800 line for families who wish to get more information. It's important to note, again, that the health card version code was not included in these mail-outs the member is asking about, and that is critical to getting health care services.

We've had some inquiries back, and I've shared information with members opposite who have had queries from their constituents. We're here to provide informa-

tion to any MPP who requires further information in this regard.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Recently, I met with a group of seniors about their outrageously high hydro bills. They work hard to conserve energy, but their bills keep going up. They are worried that privatization will drive up their bills even further. Like 80% of Ontarians, they want the government to immediately stop the sell-off of Hydro One. However, this scheme will mean skyrocketing hydro bills after the next election.

Maybe someone will leak the PC Party plan for hydro, although we know they promised to privatize it last time.

My question to the Premier: Why has she ignored these seniors and millions of Ontarians and sold off the public's majority ownership of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I once again thank the honourable member for his question. Let's be clear: The broadening of ownership of Hydro One will not reduce one single cent off anyone's bills in this province. But do you know what will reduce people's bills by 25%, if we can get this passed? It's the fair hydro plan.

He is right. I do agree with the member from the third party. They have a plan, Mr. Speaker. We disagree with it. We don't think it actually does anything near what we should be doing for families across the province. But it makes you wonder why the official opposition can't come up with a plan to talk about what they would do to help Ontarians. They've got to wait for a magic weekend in November.

The people of Ontario can't wait for the PCs to come up with a plan. That's why we're acting now for Ontario families, by bringing forward a plan that will reduce rates by 25%, if passed.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRONGER, HEALTHIER ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2017

LOI DE 2017 POUR UN ONTARIO PLUS FORT ET EN MEILLEURE SANTÉ (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 127, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter, à modifier ou à abroger diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1156 to 1201.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members please take your seats.

On May 3, 2017, Ms. Jaczek moved second reading of Bill 127. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnett, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie
Bisson, Gilles	Hillier, Randy	Smith, Todd
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLaren, Jack	Taylor, Monique
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fedeli, Victor	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Fife, Catherine	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Gates, Wayne	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Gélinas, France	Nicholls, Rick	Oosterhoff, Sam
Gretzky, Lisa		

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 40.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 11, 2017, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1300.

WITHDRAWAL OF BILL 83

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has given me notice of his intention to raise a point of privilege with respect to the withdrawal last week, with unanimous consent of the House, of Bill 83 by its sponsor, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

I am prepared to rule on this matter without hearing further from the government House leader or anyone else, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

The government House leader states that the member sought to withdraw his bill as a result of having been subject to pressure to do so. The House leader indicates that one of his staff witnessed a meeting among the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and others during which, the staffer speculates, this pressure was asserted.

First, let me emphasize the speculative nature of the assertion that is made. No recounting of events or discussions is made by a first-hand participant of the alleged meeting. It is not a sound policy to proceed to publicly conjecture about the private discussions of another.

Second, in the absence of a complaint from the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry himself that he believes his privileges have been interfered with, then there is no basis for the Speaker to deal further with this matter.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to celebrate Dutch Heritage Month. I want to recognize the consul general of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Anne van Leeuwen, and all of the people who are here at Queen's Park for this important occasion.

It is in this month that we recognize the important contributions that Dutch Canadians have made to the economic, political, social and cultural development of Ontario society. May is historically significant for the Dutch Canadian community. Every year on May 5, the Netherlands celebrates Liberation Day. It's a celebration of freedom and all of those who put their lives on the line to help a nation, freeing them from oppression.

I remember my mother's stories about liberation. The efforts of those Canadian soldiers are the reason my father later came to Canada and the reason why Canada and the Netherlands have such a strong friendship to this day.

The people of the Netherlands have not forgotten the sacrifices of our soldiers, and neither should we. Though this was not a battle on our home front, the impact that our veterans made must be remembered and celebrated. As Canadians, we must strive to keep the memory of these heroes' sacrifices alive. We must continue to celebrate Holland's liberation and take pride in our veterans' victories and their lives.

As a Dutch Canadian and a person born liberated because of their efforts, I want to say to those veterans: Thank you. We will always be indebted to you and it is because of you that we are celebrating today.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Wayne Gates: November 2014 was the first time I rose in this House to speak about Lyme disease in Ontario. Back then, I talked about people with good jobs who were being forced into poverty because they were

being forced to pay for their own medical care. In 2014, I believed, as I continue to believe today, no one in Ontario should have to choose between living in poverty and decent health care. We must do better.

I still speak with Amanda Wilson, a resident from Fort Erie, who continues to suffer from Lyme disease. I must say, I'm incredibly proud of her. She fought the disease, and now she organizes to help others who are just like her. But she is one of the people who have lost their livelihood because of this disease.

We cannot let the people of Ontario suffering from Lyme disease continue to feel like they are alone. We need a stronger strategy—one that combines prevention, treatment and education. Ontario is home to some of the most gifted doctors in the world, and we need to equip them with the tools they need to help people suffering from Lyme disease.

It's been almost three years since I first rose and spoke on the issue of Lyme disease in this House. Today, I say that this government has not done enough. The Premier and her cabinet can do better. They must do better. The people of the province of Ontario are counting on them.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO MISSISSAUGA

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: We are very lucky in my riding of Mississauga–Erindale to have the beautiful University of Toronto Mississauga campus, which provides world-class education.

It is interesting to note the university's growth from just over 6,000 students in 2000 to over 13,500 students today, many of them international students. Furthermore, an economic impact report prepared by KPMG states that the economic contribution of UTM is about \$1.3 billion annually to the local and provincial economy.

It is important to highlight some of the investments our government has made to keep the UTM campus expanding and evolving to meet contemporary needs. This includes the eighth major renovation which has happened at UTM over the past decade. The project is an expansion of the north building and is partly funded by our provincial government, which has contributed about \$52.5 million. I personally had the privilege of seeing the progress made on a daily basis during my morning walk. Another such project involved UTM's 63 labs in the William Davis building. Two labs will be rebuilt with the remainder receiving improvements to the HVAC and electrical systems. This comes partly thanks to \$14.3 million invested from the provincial government.

It is inspiring to see that our government remains committed to improving education through infrastructure and technological investment, especially at the gorgeous UTM campus.

ANDREW WILDER

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to pay tribute to a great constituent who has served our province and his

community with distinction: retired Constable Andrew Wilder.

Drew recently retired after 30 years of serving in the Ontario Provincial Police. In addition to his public service, Drew has dedicated many years to service in the community through St. John Ambulance, where he has served as the chair for the Grey Bruce Huron branch. In fact, there are three generations of the Wilder family volunteering for St. John Ambulance in Grey, Bruce and Huron counties. Through his leadership, Drew helped to secure a new training facility for St. John Ambulance in Hanover.

As members are aware, there are 42 St. John Ambulance divisions, from Sault Ste. Marie to Niagara Falls, and some 1,800 volunteers who contribute 175,000 volunteer hours every year.

In addition to Drew's work with St. John Ambulance, he has also dedicated many hours volunteering on various other committees, including the boards of Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the children's aid society. He is also a proud supporter of military and all emergency services personnel and initiatives.

In 2012, Drew was the recipient of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, in addition to having been made a member of the Order of Merit for his many notable and exceptional services.

Later this month, Drew will be made an officer in the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem at a ceremony at Queen's Park. With Drew's lifelong volunteer efforts, stellar work ethic and integrity, I think there could not have been a better candidate for the order.

I am proud of the work of Drew and all of the volunteers at St. John Ambulance. They're helping make our communities safer.

I invite the members to join me in extending our heartfelt thanks to Drew Wilder for his dedication and commitment to our province and in wishing him continued success in the future.

MICHEL DALLAIRE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais inviter toute la communauté à une célébration en hommage à M. Michel Dallaire, qui nous a quittés le 25 avril dernier à l'âge de 60 ans.

Michel Dallaire était à la fois poète, parolier, romancier, nouvelliste et photographe. Il maniait la plume avec un incroyable talent. Il avait le sens du beau et de l'inédit dans ses photographies. Il laisse derrière lui une oeuvre impressionnante et originale, mais aussi le souvenir de collaborations enrichissantes et d'amitiés solides. Sa disparition est une grande perte pour toute la communauté artistique.

On invite les proches, les amis et les admirateurs de M. Dallaire à rendre un dernier hommage à ce grand artiste parti trop tôt. Une célébration à sa mémoire aura lieu le vendredi 19 mai de 16 h à 18 h au Théâtre du Nouvel-Ontario sur le campus du Collège Boréal à Sudbury. Si vous ne pouvez pas être présent mais

aimeriez rendre hommage à Michel, nous vous invitons à laisser un message écrit ou vidéo sur le groupe Facebook « En mémoire de Michel Dallaire ».

En espérant vous voir en grand nombre lors de cette commémoration de la vie d'un homme qui a touché le cœur de chacun grâce à ses mots, ses photos ainsi que sa grande générosité. Michel était un de mes amis, et je suis très triste qu'il nous ait quittés.

Everyone is invited to a special ceremony in memory of Michel Dallaire at the TNO on Boréal campus in Sudbury on Friday, May 19, from 4 till 6.

1310

NUTRITION FOR LEARNING

Ms. Daiene Vernile: It gives me great pleasure to tell you about Nutrition for Learning. This is a vital organization in my region that's feeding hundreds of children every day. A full stomach is essential for good learning and, with this breakfast program, students in Kitchener-Waterloo are able to have a healthy breakfast that prepares them to focus and engage at school.

Nutrition for Learning administers 137 programs with healthy and nutritious food for students in my region, and with the help of provincial funding in this year's balanced budget, it ensures that kids in K-W schools continue to have a balanced breakfast.

Recently, I visited St. John's Catholic school in my riding of Kitchener Centre. It's one of the schools that's benefiting from the program. At the breakfast gathering, there was fresh fruit, yogourt, and bagels and cheese.

I spoke to one young girl from Eritrea. Her name is Victoria. She told me that her mother leaves for work at about 6 a.m. every morning. Victoria gets dropped off at a babysitter, but there are other kids there and she sometimes doesn't get enough to eat. She was often going to school on an empty stomach. But since she started participating in the Nutrition for Learning breakfast club, she told me that she's now having breakfast every day, her tummy doesn't hurt anymore, and she feels energized and ready to learn.

Funding for Nutrition for Learning was included in this year's budget. The executive director, Mary Dalton, couldn't be happier, and nor could we.

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: In this House, we have all grown increasingly aware of the opioid crisis in Ontario. The Ontario Drug Policy Research Network notes that, over the past year, the increase in opioid overdoses has grown substantially.

I want to acknowledge the government's efforts in trying to get a grip on this troubling trend, and I applaud the move to better tracking. I'm pleased for my colleagues in Ottawa to hear that \$2.5 million has been pledged to fund a local harm reduction strategy in their community.

At the same time, I want this government to be aware that the opioid crisis also exists outside of Ontario's

larger cities. Constituents from my riding are concerned that they're being ignored by a focus on Toronto and Ottawa. In the Niagara region, deaths from opioid overdoses have almost doubled since 2009, rising from 16 to 29. ER visits related to opioids climbed to 618 from 418. This past November, an individual died from a carfentanil overdose. This drug is a hundred times more potent than fentanyl, which in itself is many times stronger than heroin. In 2016, our region also saw 10 pharmacy robberies related to the opioid crisis.

I call on this government to be proactive rather than reactive and partner with our local communities to curb this crisis sooner rather than later.

PRE-ECLAMPSIA

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: For many, Mother's Day is a special opportunity to say thank you to mothers, sisters, aunts, even mentors who often take a leadership role in our lives. However, Mother's Day is not always a happy occasion for everyone, and yesterday I joined women in Kingston from across the province to remember and honour those who have been impacted by pre-eclampsia in the Promise Walk for Preeclampsia.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to Jaymee Davis for her work in organizing this community's first pre-eclampsia walk—only one of three in Canada—to raise awareness and support those who suffer from the condition. Women who have been affected in the world amount to roughly 10 million, and 500,000 babies are lost each year.

As a mother myself, I know what a wonderful and sacred gift a child is. I remember vividly the excitement and the nerves that a pregnancy brings. But for those women who have been diagnosed with pre-eclampsia, what should be a joyous event can become something entirely different.

Sponsored by the MotHERs Program, this event connected people from around the province together, with families driving from as far as Windsor and Fonthill to be there.

I was deeply impacted, and I will remain impacted, by the stories I heard yesterday. Working together to support events like this, we can raise awareness, and hopefully, one day, eventually find support and a cure for pre-eclampsia.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is unacceptable that in Peel region in the last 36 months, more than 33 adults who have a developmental disability have been abandoned by their families.

It is unacceptable that individuals who have a developmental disability are cut off from the Special Services at Home funding program when they turn age 18 and therefore have no immediate funding.

It is unacceptable that there are 1,105 individuals who have a developmental disability waiting for funding for day supports and respite services.

It is unacceptable that there are more than 65 people on the then-existing "pressures list" who have been identified by the Ministry of Community and Social Services as requiring a high level of support but there is no long-term, secure funding available.

It is unacceptable, while the Ministry of Community and Social Services reports that they have provided funding for 800 residential supports across the province, that Peel region only received supports for an estimated 12 people.

It is unacceptable that the new funding promised to the community to support an additional 600 adults has been diverted by the ministry to pay for transitional-aged youth.

It is unacceptable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la justice, et je propose son adoption.

Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 89, An Act to enact the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, to amend and repeal the Child and Family Services Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 89, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur les services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille, modifiant et abrogeant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RETIRING THE DEBT RETIREMENT CHARGE ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR L'ÉLIMINATION DE LA REDEVANCE DE LIQUIDATION DE LA DETTE

Ms. Thompson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to remove the debt retirement charge / Projet de loi 133, Loi visant à supprimer la redevance de liquidation de la dette.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In 2011, the Auditor General revealed that the government had already collected enough funds through the debt retirement charge to pay off Hydro One's stranded debt, though to date it has not been removed from the hydro bills of businesses throughout Ontario. Subsection 85(4) of the Electricity Act, 1998, is amended to provide that the debt retirement charge is not payable on electricity consumed on or after the day this bill receives royal assent.

MOTIONS

HOUSE Sittings

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, May 15, 2017, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Flynn has moved notice of motion 11. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1319 to 1324.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Bailey, Robert
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Barrett, Toby
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Delaney, Bob
Des Rosiers, Nathalie
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hoggarth, Ann
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes	Nays
Bisson, Gilles Gélinas, France	Gretzky, Lisa Taylor, Monique
	Vanthof, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 62; the nays are 5.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government finances are a mess because of 13 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandal; and

"Whereas this government is running eight consecutive budget deficits; and

"Whereas the government has racked up \$302 billion in debt, the highest debt in the country; and

"Whereas the debt servicing costs us \$11 billion in lost tax dollars every year; and

"Whereas the payments to service the debt are the third-largest expenditure and the fastest-growing expense in government, and money not spent on critical and core public services such as health care and education; and

"Whereas each \$1 billion of it equals the loss of:

"—one year of long-term care for 17,000 seniors;

"—one year of home care for 55,000 people;

"—3,550 palliative care beds for one year;

"—8,000 new affordable housing units;

"—\$260 a month for one year for each ODSP recipient;

"—one year of free tuition for 2,000 students;

"—10,000 new school playgrounds;

"Whereas if interest rates do go up, the cost of servicing Ontario's debt will increase higher still, taking out even more money out of key public services that the people of Ontario need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate action to stop sticking us with the tab for waste, mismanagement and scandal that's made life harder for Ontarians."

I fully support it, affix my name and send it with page Matthew.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition named "Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization."

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates,

lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows”—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: It’s unfortunate that the member across thinks he needs to heckle me in the middle.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Read the petition, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: “That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

It’s not too late for the Liberals to go home, either.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’m not impressed. I wish the member from Hamilton Mountain would refrain from comments other than reading her petition.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition from Fight for \$15 and Fairness. It’s a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

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“Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is currently reviewing employment and labour laws in the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to accomplish the following:

“—ensure that part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time permanent counterparts;

“—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

“—offer fair scheduling with proper advance notice;

“—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

“—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temporary agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

“—end the practice of contract flipping, support wage protection and job security for workers when companies change ownership or contracts expire;

“—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

“—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

“—offer proactive enforcement of the laws through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws;

“—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

“—all workers must be paid at least \$15 an hour, regardless of their age, student status, job or sector of employment.”

I couldn’t agree more with this petition. I have hundreds of petitions. I will affix my name and send it to the table with page Katie.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas seniors and families deserve long-term-care beds that provide high-quality care in their community;

“Whereas, according to the Ontario Long Term Care Association 2016 report, 97% of residents need help with daily activities such as getting out of bed, eating or toileting;

“Whereas there are currently 26,500 people on the wait-list for long-term care, and that number is expected to double in the next six years;

“Whereas long-term-care homes require stable and predictable funding each year to help pay for the rising cost of operations, provide quality care and invest in more beds;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to move quickly to pass Bill 110, the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act, 2017, and ensure that funding for food and utilities reflect changes in the cost of living.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Maddison to take to the table.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the northeast. I would like to thank Lynn and Gilles Joliat from my riding, in Chelmsford. It reads as follows:

“A Petition on Intercity Transportation.

“Whereas the residents of northern Ontario, particularly people who are sick or elderly, depend on public transportation for appointments in southern Ontario;

“Whereas intercity bus routes have been eliminated by Greyhound, for example, all daytime routes between Sudbury and Ottawa; and

“Whereas there have been serious reductions at Ontario Northland, including the elimination of Northland’s train services;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: Ensure that Ontario Northland offers adequate and equitable intercity transportation service from northern to southern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Maddy to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation.

“Whereas community water fluoridation is a safe, effective and scientifically proven means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas recent experience in such Canadian cities as Dorval, Calgary and Windsor that have removed fluoride from drinking water has shown a dramatic increase in dental decay; and

“Whereas the continued use of fluoride in community drinking water is at risk in Ontario cities representing more than 10% of Ontario’s population, including the region of Peel; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature has twice voted unanimously in favour of the benefits of community water fluoridation, and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Municipal Affairs and Housing urge support for amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and other applicable legislation to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory and to remove provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to introduce legislation amending the Health Protection and Promotion Act and make changes to other applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I affix my signature to this petition, as I agree with it, and give it to page Eesha.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have an important petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Bill C-14, the federal legislation which legalized medical assistance in dying (MAID) in Canada explicitly affirms it is not intended to compel anyone to act against their deeply held beliefs; and

“Whereas the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has adopted the effective-referral protocol for MAID, which may compel health care professionals to act contrary to their deeply held beliefs; and

“Whereas the effective-referral protocol for MAID is globally unprecedented; and

“Whereas there are viable alternatives for the provision of effective access to MAID that would allow all health care professionals to continue to practise with ethical integrity; and

“Whereas this effective-referral-protocol policy may compel health care professionals to make a dehumanizing choice between their profession and their faith, conscience or commitment to the Hippocratic oath;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately take action to protect the rights of Ontario citizens by eliminating the effective-referral protocol for medical assistance in dying, upholding the conscience rights of health care professionals.”

I’ve affixed my name to this petition and I’ll send it to the table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition entitled “Support Families by Eliminating Waiting Lists for the Passport Program Now.” They’ve come from all over the province. I’d like to thank Hugh Paulin from my riding for signing the petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas when children living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities turn 18, support from the Ontario government drastically changes;

“Whereas families in Windsor-Essex and across Ontario are met with continuous waiting lists when trying to access support under the Passport Program;

“Whereas waiting lists place enormous stress on caregivers, parents, children and entire families;

“Whereas all Ontarians living with ASD and other developmental disabilities are entitled to a seamless transition of services;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take immediate action to eliminate the waiting lists for Passport funding so that people living with ASD and other developmental disabilities and their families can access the support they deserve.”

I agree with this petition, will sign my name to it and send it to the table with page Katie.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly, titled “Support the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan.”

“Whereas electricity prices have increased and in too many cases become unaffordable for Ontarians;

“Whereas Ontario is a prosperous province and people should never have to choose between hydro and other daily necessities;

“Whereas people want to know that hydro rate relief is on the way; that relief will go to everyone; and that relief will be lasting because it is built on significant change;

“Whereas the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant

system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

“Whereas the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan would provide people with low incomes and those living in rural communities with even greater reductions to their electricity bills;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan and provide relief for Ontario electricity consumers as quickly as possible;

“Continue working to ensure clean, reliable and affordable electricity is available for all Ontarians.”

I certainly support this, Speaker, and send it to you via page Claire.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Bill C-14, the federal legislation which legalized medical assistance in dying (MAID) in Canada explicitly affirms it is not intended to compel anyone to act against their deeply held beliefs; and

“Whereas the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has adopted the effective-referral protocol for MAID, which may compel health care professionals to act contrary to their deeply held beliefs; and

“Whereas the effective-referral protocol for MAID is globally unprecedented; and

“Whereas there are viable alternatives for the provision of effective access to MAID that would allow all health care professionals to continue to practise with ethical integrity; and

“Whereas this effective-referral-protocol policy may compel health care professionals to make a dehumanizing choice between their profession and their faith, conscience or commitment to the Hippocratic oath;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately take action to protect the conscience rights of Ontario’s health care professionals by abolishing the effective-referral protocol for medical assistance in dying.”

I agree with this and send it down with Emma.

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PRIX DE L'ESSENCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais dire merci à M. Ernest Lefebvre de Onaping dans mon comté pour la pétition sur le prix de l’essence.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Alors que les automobilistes du nord de l’Ontario continuent d’être soumis à des fluctuations marquées dans le prix de l’essence; et

« Alors que la province pourrait éliminer les prix abusifs et opportunistes et offrir des prix justes, stables et prévisibles; et

« Alors que cinq provinces et de nombreux états américains ont déjà une réglementation des prix d’essence; et

« Considérant que les juridictions qui réglementent le prix de l’essence ont : moins de fluctuations des prix, moins d’écart de prix entre les communautés urbaines et rurales et des prix d’essence annualisés inférieurs; »

Ils demandent « à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« D’accorder à la Commission de l’énergie de l’Ontario le mandat de surveiller le prix de l’essence partout en Ontario afin de réduire la volatilité des prix et les différences de prix régionales, tout en encourageant la concurrence. »

J’appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer, et je demande à Eesha de l’amener à la table des Greffiers.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

“Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

“Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communicate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

I agree with this petition and I sign it and give it to page Maddy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, that concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon. I apologize to the members whom I was unable to recognize, but the time is now up.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR HYDRO ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 POUR DES FRAIS D’ÉLECTRICITÉ ÉQUITABLES

Mr. Thibeault moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to enact the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017 and to make amendments to the Electricity

Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 132, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le Plan ontarien pour des frais d'électricité équitables et modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Energy to lead off the debate.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and be able to speak to this act, but, first off, I do think it's important that I let you know and this House know that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

I also want to thank all members who are in the House in the Legislature this afternoon to debate the proposed Fair Hydro Act. This act, if passed by this Legislature, would deliver the single largest reduction to electricity rates in Ontario's history, starting this summer.

Before talking about the measures within the proposed legislation, I'd like to explain why electricity rates in this province have been increasing. That's a challenge that this proposed legislation would effectively address, if passed. So let's begin with a brief overview of Ontario's electricity system.

By all accounts, Ontarians currently benefit from a clean and reliable supply of electricity. According to the Independent Electricity System Operator's Ontario Planning Outlook, released last fall as part of the Ministry of Energy's long-term energy plan consultation process, we're well positioned to meet our electricity needs for the next 10 years.

The next decade's worth of secure energy supply is a result of significant investments our government has made to modernize and upgrade Ontario's electricity system—important investments that included more than \$50 billion in electricity generation and grid infrastructure rebuild right across our province. These investments demonstrate our government's ongoing commitment to improve the energy system.

But now let's jump back 14 years in time. Many in this House may remember that, prior to 2003, we struggled with an electricity system that was unreliable and was in desperate need of repairs and, of course, upgrades. Governments of all stripes ignored the necessary maintenance and investments the system needed. The system our government inherited was at risk of disruptive brownouts and blackouts. Mr. Speaker, try to imagine running an automotive assembly line in Oshawa or a software development company in Ottawa or a critical care unit in a hospital—for example, in my hometown of Sudbury—under the threat of debilitating power failures. But now let's fast-forward to the present day. Ontario's supply mix is not only reliable; our electricity supply mix is also clean and green. That's an incredible accomplishment, something we should all be proud of, especially when you consider that in 2003, coal represented a quarter of Ontario's electricity supply mix.

It's also an important testament to the leadership and resolution that it took for the province to rid itself of dirty coal. The former vice-president of the United States, Al

Gore, hailed this momentous achievement as the largest greenhouse gas reduction project in North America. He also provided our province with some high praise, stating, "Ontario has distinguished itself as a leader in Canada and around the world." Our decision to end coal-fired electricity remains the single largest climate change initiative undertaken in North America.

The benefits of eliminating coal are many. It reduced smog days in Ontario from 53 in 2005 to zero last year, which is improving the health of all Ontarians. Long-term health care savings are estimated to reach \$70 billion by 2040, by reducing emergency room visits, hospital admissions and respiratory illnesses. Ontario will also be benefiting from these investments to strengthen our clean and reliable electricity system for decades, both economically and environmentally. Cutting coal reduced the province's GHG emissions by 30 megatonnes, the equivalent of removing seven million cars from Ontario's roads. Closing Ontario's coal plants eliminated some of Canada's largest sources of pollution, including greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, along with other air pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, mercury, arsenic and lead.

Putting dirty coal-fired electricity generation in the rear-view mirror places Ontario at the forefront in combatting global climate change, one of this generation's greatest challenges. But in the advent of extreme weather like floods and droughts, and our rising concerns about our ability to grow food in some regions of Ontario, climate change impacts our daily lives. We must work collectively to reduce our carbon footprint. By going coal-free, and doing so a year ahead of schedule, electricity generation in our province is one step closer in helping to meet our GHG emission reduction targets.

These targets were outlined with the November 2015 release of the Ontario climate change action strategy. This forward-thinking strategy was followed by the release of the five-year climate change action plan in June 2016.

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The CCAP essentially outlines the key actions the government is taking and will continue to take to reduce carbon emissions in the province, and in all likelihood will significantly impact how energy is used in Ontario.

Of particular importance for Ontario's energy sector, the CCAP also proposes to use conservation, energy efficiency and fuel-switching to reduce the use of fossil fuels such as oil, gasoline and natural gas, and increase the use of clean electricity and clean fuels. Equally important, CCAP, which leverages the targets set out in the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016, clearly stipulates Ontario's GHG emission reduction targets. Those targets are as follows: a 15% reduction in GHG emissions below 1990 levels by 2020, followed by a 37% reduction below 1990 levels by 2030, and subsequently followed by an 80% reduction by 2050. Based on greenhouse gas reporting data available to the public, Ontario has already met its 2014 target in the form of a 6% reduction in emission levels below 1990 levels, Mr. Speaker.

We established the cap-and-trade system as well, a market-based system aimed at achieving the most cost-effective emissions reductions. By definition, a cap-and-trade program will reduce the amount of greenhouse gas pollution released into our atmosphere by setting a limit, or cap, on the amount of greenhouse gases that can be released. The cap is then dropped each year to lower emissions, and large emitters must have enough permits, technically known as allowances, to cover their emissions. If they do not, they can purchase additional allowances. To that end, the system creates a market for a limited number of pollution permits, and companies that emit more than their allotment can purchase additional allowances through government auctions or through companies that have surplus allowances. This ensures the overall cap is maintained.

Industries are also incented to find new ways to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, whether they are buying or selling permits. The system rewards innovative companies, provides more certainty for industries and creates more opportunities for investment.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that cap-and-trade's first compliance period began on January 1 of this year. Three months later, on March 22 of this year, the program's participants took part in the first auction of GHG allowances. I'm proud to say that all available allowances were sold at a settlement price of \$18.08. The success of this inaugural auction of greenhouse gas emissions is an accomplishment that Ontarians should be proud of. I want to personally thank the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for his tireless efforts on this file.

While we're on the subject of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, a majority of Ontarians supported this government's decision to cut out coal-fired electricity generation. According to an Ekos poll conducted in May 2016, 74% of Ontarians surveyed said that phasing out coal and supporting renewable power was the right thing to do.

Finally, going coal-free means that we've met two requirements under the federal government's pan-Canadian framework. First is that all provinces phase out the use of traditional coal-fired power by 2030. We've already done that. Second is that 90% of Canada's electric power generation would be GHG-emissions-free by the same 2030 deadline.

For added context, Alberta, where coal represents over half of its electricity generation, based on 2015 figures—the province plans to generate 30% of its electricity from renewables by 2030. Not to be outdone, for Saskatchewan the goal is even higher: 50% renewables by 2050. So between the two provinces there could be as much as 7,000 megawatts of new renewable energy supply over the next 15 years.

Of course, Saskatchewan and Alberta aren't the only Canadian provinces to embrace new renewable energy sources. In a report released earlier this month, the National Energy Board found that renewable energy production in Canada jumped 17% between 2005 and 2015. Currently, the portion of all electricity in Canada generated by renewables is now 66%, up from 60% a

decade earlier. Globally, Canada ranks fourth in renewable energy production, behind China, the United States and Brazil.

The National Energy Board's report also stated that wind power in Canada saw the biggest growth from 2005 to 2015. In 2015, wind power produced 20 times as much—more than 28,500 gigawatt hours—which amounted to 4.4% of power generation.

As for solar power: Back in 2005, Canada produced almost no solar power at all. But in 2015, Canada produced more than 3,000 gigawatt hours. According to the National Energy Board, Ontarians can take pride in the fact that our province produces 98% of all Canadian solar production. That's truly impressive, Mr. Speaker.

Now with respect to the second requirement under the federal government's pan-Canadian framework, that 90% of Canada's electric power generation needs to be free of GHG emissions by 2030: Ontario is well on its way to meeting that target.

Let me take a minute just to explain that. In Ontario, renewable energy currently comprises 40% of the province's installed capacity and generates one third of the electricity we produce, based on 2016 figures. When combined with nuclear energy, which does not emit GHGs and accounts for one third of Ontario's installed capacity, as well as producing about 60% of the province's electricity, 90% of Ontario's electricity generation came from clean energy sources last year. That should serve as another point of pride for Ontarians.

This combination of much-needed multi-billion dollar investments in the electricity infrastructure sector and the precedent-setting elimination of coal-fired electricity came at a cost. This cost, in turn, led to rising electricity rates that have taken a toll on household budgets across the province.

As a government, we have acknowledged the causes of these increases. While this acknowledgement was important, actions speak louder than words. In terms of concrete actions, we previously introduced a host of measures aimed at reducing energy costs. These include a new historic agreement with the province of Quebec that will limit GHG emissions by making Quebec's renewable energy supply available to Ontario through their operator, Hydro-Québec, and Ontario's IESO. Under this provincial agreement, our IESO will purchase a total of 14 terawatt hours from Hydro-Québec over a seven-year period, from 2017 to 2023.

Of added significance, Ontario will reduce electricity system costs for consumers by about \$70 million from previous forecasts by importing up to two terawatt hours annually of clean hydro power from Quebec at targeted times when natural gas would otherwise be used. There is enough electricity to power the city of Kitchener for one year through that agreement.

It will also reduce the electricity sector's GHG emissions by approximately one million tonnes per year. On top of this, Ontario in turn will leverage Quebec's storage capacity to improve our own clean energy resources, and

we'll also reserve 500 megawatts of capacity for Hydro-Québec to meet Quebec's winter peak demand.

This historic, mutually beneficial agreement is a primary example—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I don't believe we have a quorum present for this afternoon's debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. We have up to five minutes to bring a quorum in.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

1400

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The Minister of Energy has the floor.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and continue talking about Ontario's fair hydro plan. Again, just to reiterate: I'll be splitting my time with the member from Mississauga-Streetsville.

As I was saying, under this interprovincial agreement with our IESO, we're going to purchase a total of 14 kilowatt hours from Hydro Québec over a seven-year period, from 2017 to 2023.

With Quebec and Ontario together, we form Canada's largest economic region, accounting for about 56% of GDP and 53% of interprovincial trade. The successful renegotiation of the Green Energy Investment Agreement serves as another measure of our provinces taking action to reduce electricity costs. In financial terms, this reduced contract-related costs by \$3.7 billion.

We've also introduced a more competitive Large Renewable Procurement, or LRP I, to help drive down costs by approximately \$1.5 billion. Added to this, we suspended the second Large Renewable Procurement program, or LRP II, as well as the Energy-from-Waste Standard Offer Program. These two measures alone provided up to \$3.8 billion in savings. On top of that, we reduced the feed-in tariff prices with the help of annual price reviews, saving Ontario ratepayers at least \$1.9 billion; and specific to FIT, we limited the FIT 5 procurement target to up to 150 megawatts and suspended future FIT procurements, resulting in up to \$129 million in savings.

Mr. Speaker, we recently provided eligible rural ratepayers with an additional \$110 million of financial relief via the Rural and Remote Rate Protection Program. That's 800,000 families right across the rural and northern parts of our great province.

In addition, we announced a further expansion of eligibility for the Industrial Conservation Initiative, lowering the general ICI threshold from five megawatts to one megawatt, and even further, through our proposed fair hydro plan, to 500 kilowatts for certain consumers involved in manufacturing and, of course, in greenhouses, as I know the Minister of Agriculture would know. This could provide up to one third in savings for eligible consumers.

We have nuclear energy-related cost-saving measures to consider as well. Of particular importance is deferring the construction of two new nuclear reactors at Darlington, avoiding an estimated \$15 billion in new construction costs. Instead, we opted to focus on its existing nuclear fleet and have now commenced the refurbishment of Darlington. This significant project is often described as Canada's largest clean energy project. It will secure 3,500 megawatts of affordable, reliable and emissions-free power. It's also worth mentioning that, to date, Darlington's refurbishment is progressing well. It is on track to be completed on time and on budget.

Managed by Ontario Power Generation, Darlington's refurbishment will create good jobs and boost economic activity right across the province. According to the Conference Board of Canada, economic activity related to Darlington's refurbishment and continued operation to 2055 will contribute a total of \$90 billion to Ontario's GDP and increase employment, on average, by over 14,000 jobs in Ontario per year. In addition, Ontario's workers and businesses are expected to receive well over \$9 for every \$10 of the project's economic benefits.

Aside from serving as a reliable, cost-effective and emissions-free source of electricity and providing a significant boost to our province's economy, nuclear-related technology is an important source of innovative, cutting-edge research and development. For example, medical isotopes, a foundation of nuclear medicine that function as safe radioactive substances, are injected into a patient to light up and target an organ so that clinicians using specialized cameras can peer inside a patient's body at a molecular level in real time.

The wonders of nuclear technology don't end just there. The neutrons developed in nuclear research facilities help further our understanding of plant nutrition. This research provides essential information about advancing global food security in today's era of climate change. Researchers also use these neutrons to analyze the flow of pollutants in ecosystems and to evaluate their impact on soil, lakes, streams and other organisms.

But that's not all. In the field of material science, neutrons infiltrate deep inside materials and provide information about interior structures at the atomic level, and this makes them valuable for material-related scientific research and for developing advanced materials to benefit clean energy technologies and information technology hardware.

And specific to the aerospace industry, neutrons are used to detect flaws in parts, which leads to better lifespan and the safety of aerospace-related materials. In

addition, research that examines the effects of cosmic radiation on aerospace components will help inform the design of satellites, space telescopes and interplanetary space probes.

Added to this, nuclear-produced neutrons are used to determine the composition and geological age of Canada's land masses to help identify deposits of resources, including gold and uranium.

The many wonders of nuclear technology never cease to amaze me and our province.

But now we're turning to the nuclear-related cost-saving measures—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I believe we're supposed to be speaking to Bill 132, the fair hydro bill. I'm not sure what the member is speaking about with his cosmic rays and whatnot, but I don't see any cosmic rays in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I hear the minister speaking about electricity issues and I don't find a valid point of order.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do get a lot of our energy in this province, about 60%, from the nuclear sector.

As I was talking about and as I was getting to, when we're talking about nuclear energy-related cost-saving measures—I was speaking to this earlier. We made a prudent decision to maximize the value of our existing nuclear fleet by starting the Bruce Power refurbishments in 2020 instead of 2016. This measure alone helped achieve \$1.7 billion in cost savings.

Finally, Ontario will continue operating Pickering up to 2024, pending regulatory approvals. This will save ratepayers as much as \$600 million. This project would also protect 4,500 jobs right across the Durham region and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least eight million tonnes.

However, despite all of these cost-saving measures I've highlighted so far today, electricity rates in Ontario have continued to rise. Ontarians have made one thing abundantly clear: They want substantial relief from high electricity bills, and they want this relief to last. This concern over rapidly rising electricity rates was also raised during last fall's long-term energy plan engagement sessions organized by the Ministry of Energy between October 2016 and, of course, January 2017.

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For those who are in the assembly and not familiar with our long-term energy plan, let me provide some brief background information.

The long-term energy plan serves as a pricing road map that sets out the direction for Ontario's energy future for the next 20 years. Ontario released the first LTERP in 2010. Three years later, in December 2013, Ontario released its updated long-term energy plan, Achieving Balance, and since then has been implementing the plan.

In 2016, the government passed the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act. This important legislation enshrines a long-term planning framework that builds upon the robust process that was used to develop the 2013 long-term energy plan. The legislation also ensures that energy planning takes a transparent and pragmatic approach and that future LTERPs incorporate the following objectives: affordability when it comes to electricity; reliability; clean energy; GHG emissions; community and indigenous engagement; and conservation and demand management. In addition, the legislation empowers our system operator, the Independent Electricity System Operator, to undertake a competitive selection of transmission-related procurement when appropriate. This competitive approach in turn will ensure that Ontario ratepayers get the best value from energy-related infrastructure investments.

As you can imagine, developing the long-term energy plan is a highly collaborative process that involves the Ministry of Energy's energy-related agencies and stakeholders. It also provides an opportunity for people across Ontario to provide invaluable feedback. With this in mind, as previously mentioned, my ministry launched the long-term energy plan engagement last fall.

Ontarians participated in this important conversation in three ways, Mr. Speaker. The first was travelling across the province to discuss issues related to the energy sector in person. There were stakeholder sessions and public open houses in 17 communities across the province. We also held 17 engagement sessions with indigenous communities, which provided First Nation and Métis community members with the opportunity to provide their perspective and their input into the long-term energy plan process. In some cases, officials from the Ministry of Energy travelled to some of the most remote parts of the province to engage with members of First Nations communities, to gather their feedback first-hand.

The second manner by which Ontarians participated in the long-term energy plan conversation was through Energy Talks, an online survey divided into eight top-of-mind energy-related themes. These themes included "Your Energy Use," "Supplying Electricity," "Fuels," "Investing in Electricity," "The Price Of Energy"—a popular topic, as you can well imagine, Mr. Speaker—"Carbon Pricing," "In Your Community" and "Your Local Utilities." Energy Talks also included a comments section.

The third way Ontarians participated in the long-term energy plan consultation was to send written submissions through the Environmental Registry.

To help inform the long-term energy plan engagement process, the Ministry of Energy released a discussion guide with two technical reports prior to the long-term energy plan engagement sessions.

The first document was a discussion guide that we developed entitled Planning Ontario's Energy Future. This 50-page document was comprised of five informative parts and intended to inform long-term energy plan engagement discussions.

The second foundation document was IESO's Ontario Planning Outlook. In response to an official request from the Minister of Energy and in accordance with subsection 25.29(3) of the Electricity Act, 1998, this technical report presents the IESO's planning outlook from 2016 up to 2035.

The final document, and developed for the first time as part of the LTEP engagement process, is the Fuels Technical Report. This comprehensive document, developed by Navigant Consulting, Inc., provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of Ontario's fuel sector.

The Ontario Planning Outlook and the Fuels Technical Report both provide outlooks for energy demand that align with initiatives from the climate change action plan. The reports consider how energy demand will change as the province transitions to a low-carbon economy. For example, there are outlooks where demand for electricity increases if the number of electric vehicles increases. As demand changes, the reports identify how this would impact energy supply, transmission and distribution.

Now that the engagement process is complete, the next step in the process is that the Ministry of Energy will develop the final LTEP based on the feedback received through the process just described.

The final long-term energy plan will be posted online, and a decision notice will be posted on the Environmental Registry. All the comments received through the Environmental Registry will in turn be made available to the public following the final long-term energy plan publication.

Finally, once the LTEP is released I will take two important steps. First, I will issue directives to the IESO and the Ontario Energy Board asking both entities to develop implementation plans related to the LTEP's goals and objectives. Second, I will conduct a review of these implementation plans to ensure that the relevant goals and objectives are achieved in the proposed framework.

As I was saying earlier, Mr. Speaker, be it the LTEP engagements or my meetings with the general public and energy stakeholders from across Ontario, I'm fully aware of the concerns over rising electricity prices. So our government would take significant action to provide immediate and substantial relief to help lower electricity bills through the proposed Fair Hydro Act, 2017.

If passed, this act would reduce electricity bills by 25%, on average, for all residential consumers, starting this summer. As many as half a million small businesses and farms will benefit from this bill cut. This plan would also cap rate increases at inflation for the next four years.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that this 25% on average reduction includes the 8% rebate equal to the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax, effective as of January 1 of this year.

The Fair Hydro Act would also help vulnerable electricity consumers in a multitude of ways. Let me explain. First, the Rural and Remote Rate Protection Program would be expanded to provide delivery charge relief for

some 800,000 customers—up from 350,000 today—served by local distribution companies with the highest rates. As an example, a Hydro One low-density consumer on electric heat consuming 2,500 kilowatt hours a month would see their distribution charge reduced by about \$75 per month more, for a total savings of \$135 if you include the entire and current RRRP. Francesca Dobbyn, the executive director of Bruce Grey's United Way, said that this evening out of the delivery charge shouldered by those in rural areas is fantastic news.

Secondly, the fair hydro plan expanded the Ontario Electricity Support Program. We also call it the OESP program. This program lowers electricity costs for the most vulnerable through a rebate on their monthly bills, by increasing credits by 50% and expanding eligibility. These changes to the OESP were effective as of May 1 of this year.

I also think it's worth mentioning that since its launch on January 1, 2016, the OESP program has accepted more than 192,000 low-income households to receive the monthly on-bill credits.

We're also working with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to increase participation in the OESP for customers already enrolled in other provincial social assistance programs.

Commenting on Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan following its early March announcement, the mayor of Kapuskasing and current president of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities was quoted as saying, "We are pleased that electricity ratepayers will see the positive benefits of" Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan "in the near future and for the commitment that rates will not increase beyond the rate of inflation for the next four years." As a northerner, I appreciate His Worship's supportive comments.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, if approved, the legislation would eliminate the delivery charge for all on-reserve First Nation residential customers through a new delivery credit. The Ontario Energy Board estimates that this would provide eligible customers an average monthly savings of \$85.

Added to this, on-reserve First Nation residential customers would automatically qualify—about 21,500 customers in total.

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We would also help facilitate greater information-sharing between distributors and band councils to better identify all on-reserve First Nations customers. This proposed measure was well received by First Nations leaders and their communities. Amongst them was Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day, who said providing the delivery line credit would effectively reduce energy poverty in First Nations communities. Mr. Speaker, he says this "allows a path forward for greater quality of life for First Nations in Ontario."

As part of the fair hydro plan, Ontario is establishing an Affordability Fund that will provide energy efficiency measures to Ontarians who do not qualify for low-income conservation programs and who are otherwise

unable to make energy efficiency improvements without financial assistance. The government has already taken the necessary steps to establish a \$100-million Affordability Fund in advance of legislation that will provide local distribution companies with an additional tool to help customers ineligible for existing low-income conservation programs.

Local distribution companies will apply for funding through the fund's administrator to offer energy efficiency measures to those customers in their service territories that meet the targeted eligibility criteria. Ontarians could receive measures ranging from an average of \$3,000 to \$5,000 per customer. Measures that could be funded include energy-saving light bulbs, power bars, energy-efficient window air conditioning units, refrigerators and insulation, for example, Mr. Speaker.

Collectively, the proposed changes I've outlined in detail today represent the single largest reduction to electricity rates in Ontario's history. But it doesn't end there, Mr. Speaker.

If passed, the legislation would change how some of these measures would be funded. Previously, the cost of social programs that help some of the most vulnerable electricity consumers were disproportionately placed on the shoulders of today's electricity ratepayers. Under the proposed Fair Hydro Act, the electricity support programs I outlined earlier, the Ontario Electricity Support Program and the Rural and Remote Rate Protection Program, would be funded by the provincial tax base.

The overall fiscal impact of this relief and the corresponding restructuring that will take place will cost the province about \$2.5 billion over the next three years. Fortunately, thanks to a strong Ontario economy, we have the means to cover this cost and to keep our budget balanced. Last year alone, for example, Ontario's GDP grew by 2.7%. That's almost twice the rate of growth for all of Canada. On a global scale, the growth in our GDP is more than both Germany at 1.9% and the United States at 1.6%. In fact, Ontario's GDP is stronger than all G7 countries. When it comes to Ontario's unemployment rate, it was at 5.8%, the lowest it's been since 2001.

To continue to strengthen our economy, the fair hydro plan provides other measures to support businesses. Along with the 25% on average reduction for as many as half a million small businesses, farms and greenhouses, Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan will also help reduce electricity costs for our province's medium-sized job creators.

Last month we expanded the ICI program to allow for more small manufacturing and industrial facilities to qualify. Since 2011, this program has helped hundreds of industrial facilities save about a third on their electricity bill. By expanding this program, we are building on one of the smartest and most successful electricity rate mitigation measures we have ever implemented. It's smart because it helps the electricity system lower costs through conservation, and successful because eligible ICI customers save significantly by participating in this program.

Last year, independent studies showed that current ICI participants helped lower peak electricity demand in

Ontario by about 800 megawatts. That's the equivalent of one nuclear unit, Mr. Speaker. By expanding this program to more eligible participants, we are going to put businesses in the driver's seat by allowing them more control over their electricity costs. Small manufacturers and industries that would be eligible to participate in the ICI include the food and beverage industry; apparel; plastic and rubber; computers and electronics; transportation equipment; fabricated metal products—automatic coding is the best way for me to explain that; chemicals; wood products; and, of course, as I mentioned before, now that the Minister of Agriculture is here with me, greenhouses.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Exactly.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Partnering with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, we will be launching an awareness campaign so even more of our province's businesses will participate in ICI.

Finally, I'd like to take a moment to elaborate upon a key component of the proposed Fair Hydro Act: namely, the refinancing of the global adjustment—or what we call the GA—which accounts for the fixed costs of running Ontario's electricity generation fleet plus the cost of conservation-related programs.

By its very nature, the GA is instrumental in maintaining a reliable electricity system by ensuring that sufficient generating capacity is available across the province at any given time. As part of the proposed Fair Hydro Act, we would refinance a portion of the GA to spread the cost of electricity-related investments over a longer period of time to better reflect Ontario's energy assets' lifespan. It's not fair that a senior living on a fixed income pays a high rate for their electricity use today, so that 20 years from now an Ontario family pays less. We would create a more equitable and fair electricity system through the proposed legislation. Everyone in Ontario would pay their fair share to keep the lights on.

For this reason, under the Fair Hydro Act, a portion of the cost covered by the GA would be refinanced in the short term to make electricity bills more affordable to today's electricity consumers. They've already done the heavy lifting; it's now time to share the load.

Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that, if passed, the Fair Hydro Act would ensure electricity rates come down, stay down and, most importantly, benefit all residential customers and as many as half a million small businesses across the province. Equally important, by providing real long-lasting relief, the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act is, without a doubt, the right thing to do.

With that, I now look forward to hearing my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville. Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: As the minister was saying, in the absence of the parliamentary assistant, he would likely run out of voice. I very much understand that.

Let me pick up where my colleague and my friend the minister has left off, and let's talk about the impact of, as

he put it, “stretching out” the global adjustment. I would like to put this in another way.

This is an awful lot like a young family going in to see their bank to say, “We’re interested in a new home, and we would like to talk about a mortgage.” The banker would then say, “Well, let’s discuss the options that you have. A home is a major purchase. It’s probably the most important purchase you’ll make”—just as electricity infrastructure for the province is among the most important—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

I have to be able to hear him. I’m not deaf, but I have to be able to hear him. So I would ask the House to come to order and allow the member from Mississauga—Streetsville to make his point.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Some 50-odd years of playing goal have made me imperious to heckling, but I do thank the Speaker for his intervention.

Let’s go back to where we were: If you have a family discussing financing of a home on which they’ve made an offer and it has been accepted, and they’re talking to their bank, the banker will likely say, “Okay, let’s talk about some of the options. What is it that you can afford?” They’ll come out with a number of scenarios, and their bank will say to them, “What are your objectives here?” Of course, they want to minimize the interest costs that they pay. However, the trade-off is that they have to be able to afford to live in the house.

The compromise that all of us do as we’re buying our own homes, where we’re financing them over a period of between—I don’t know—10 or 12 and upwards of 25 years, is to say, “Every few years, we’ll renegotiate the rate, but we accept that we’re going to finance it over this period of time.”

While our objective in purchasing a home is certainly not to pay the bank any more interest than we have to, we also have to balance that with the fact that we’ve got to be able to afford to live in the home, to carry on a life, to be able to buy things, so we’ll say, “Okay, what do our mortgage payments look like, if we finance the home over seven or eight years?” And you think to yourself, “God, I’d like to get rid of my mortgage that quickly.” The banker will come back to you with a monthly payment, and you swallow hard and say, “I can’t afford that.” So then they go through another few scenarios, and finally you arrive at a point where you look at one another and you say, “Yes, that fits within our budget,” and there is your amortization period.

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That’s not materially different than what the province has done by refinancing a lot of our capital assets which prior to this had been paid for over a very short period of time—this amount of time, where the lifetime of the asset is two and sometimes three times longer than that. As the minister said, it makes people pay more money upfront so that people who may not even have been born yet or are certainly very young are going to pay less later. The

principle behind the refinancing of a lot of Ontario’s capital assets is, shouldn’t people pay equitably for the capital assets whose power they are using—the dams, the nuclear reactors, the wind and gas generators, the transmission lines? If you plan to in your life consume those over a period of about 30 years, shouldn’t you pay for them over the time that you consume the energy, which is about 30 years? That’s really all there is to it. It’s not that much harder.

The other part of the Fair Hydro Act is to take charges that, over the years, had accumulated on electricity bills not for any reason more profound than that they have always been there. So while we have, as Ontarians, always been generous in assisting seniors, people on modest incomes, people in rural areas, people in remote areas, First Nations and people with assistive devices with the cost of their electricity, we had always put them on the electricity bill. Similar costs, such as the Ontario drug benefit, the Ontario Disability Support Program and so on and so forth, are normally paid for off of the tax bill. The amount of money being paid is the same, and whether it’s paid on your utility bill or part of your broader tax bill, it isn’t as if someone has waved a magic wand and made the costs go away.

What the province is proposing in this bill is to make those costs more equitable, to say that if we, as a province, share our social costs on our tax bill, shouldn’t we share our social costs with regard to electricity in the same way that we share them with regard to primary, secondary and post-secondary education, in which either all or a very large part of education is financed by the taxpayer? Shouldn’t that portion of our electricity social costs be financed in the same way? That’s the other part of it.

I would like to talk a little bit about some of the impact of that. In the course of refinancing it, the province, as it had done through the recession, has borrowed a lot of money. The only alternative worse than borrowing all of the money that Ontario borrowed since the bottom of the recession in about the middle of 2009 would have been not to borrow the money. Because the fact of the matter is that austerity, a strategy practised by the euro zone, a strategy practised in the United States, in every single place in the world that it has been implemented and in every single era in the world in which it has been implemented has failed. People have ended up with less prosperity, not more, and higher debt, not lower.

The jurisdictions that exited the 2008 recession the quickest—and Ontario was one of those. We’re the ones that intelligently borrowed and invested in infrastructure to provide the means for people to be able to keep working during the recession. Not to have borrowed that money would have cost Ontario its North American leading auto industry, it would have thrown about a million families out of work, and it would have caused countless hundreds of thousands of people to have lost their homes. So it was an intelligent and forward-thinking method of doing it. The money borrowed to do that, in much the same way as the province is proposing to

refinance the global adjustment in this bill, the Fair Hydro Act—the Canadian borrowing is 70% of that total. So in essence, you're borrowing money from yourself to repay it to yourself. When you add in our other North American family member, the United States, that amounts to 96% of our borrowing. So it's not as if conditions somewhere else in the world will cause Ontario's debt service to gyrate. It just simply won't.

As well, as the minister has pointed out, Ontario is by far the fastest-growing jurisdiction in North America and certainly the fastest-growing in the Great Lakes basin. I've talked about this in the past. If the Great Lakes basin, of which Ontario is a key part, were itself a country—and by the Great Lakes basin I mean those states and provinces surrounding North America's Great Lakes, so, just as a quick recap: New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec. If those jurisdictions were a stand-alone country, the only two countries on earth with a GDP greater than the Great Lakes basin would be the United States and China. And in that Great Lakes basin, the elephant in the room is the province of Ontario—the largest GDP, the largest population, the fastest-growing economy, and the most prosperous.

Speaker, let's look at some of the outfall of doing the intelligent investing that Ontario did. It meant, between the bottom of the recession in 2009 and now, the addition of more than 700,000 net new jobs—overwhelmingly, good-paying jobs, jobs with a future, careers indeed, jobs that are overwhelmingly full-time—Ontario was the winner by far in the recession.

The weighted average term of borrowing in Ontario right now is 14 years. In the hypothetical event that the cost of servicing debt were to suddenly spike—and let's remember, even in the period of high inflation and high interest rates in the early 1980s, when interest rates spiked very suddenly up to 20.5% or 21.5%, I can't remember which, they immediately fell. But with Ontario having that weighted average term of borrowing of 14 years, it's not going to affect us because if in the middle of that interest rates fluctuate, we've locked in all of the money that we borrowed at interest rates of nearly zero for periods of up to 30 years.

Indeed, the correct question would be, if you didn't borrow the money when interest rates were nearly zero, why didn't you? Why didn't you renew your infrastructure when you could get the money for next to nothing? Ontario did exactly that. It borrowed the money that it could, it borrowed the money when it was practically being given away—which is still true, by the way—and we refurbished our infrastructure. What Ontario has done and what this Fair Hydro Act continues doing is to essentially buy for Ontario, not just in electricity but also in our civil infrastructure, tomorrow's infrastructure—to pay for it with yesterday's money, to finance it throughout its entire lifetime at interest rates of nearly zero.

If you're on the other side of the Great Lakes, you're looking at the opposite problem, because they didn't do

that. If you're on the other side of the Great Lakes, you're looking at the conundrum of having to play catch-up to buy today's infrastructure, to pay for it with tomorrow's money at tomorrow's prices, and to finance it all at interest rates that have already begun to go up. Where would you rather be? Most companies are answering that. They'd rather be in Ontario, and they're voting with their feet by coming here. They're coming here in greater numbers than they are anywhere else in North America. They're coming here to Ontario—population about 13.5 million—in numbers, in absolute terms, greater than the state of California, with a population triple Ontario's. More foreign direct investment is coming to Ontario than to the state of California.

What it also means—I looked up the interest on debt. During the term of the last PC government, that interest on debt averaged somewhere between 7% and 9% during the eight years that that government was in office. Right now, that average interest on debt is 3.5%, less than half of what they were paying for it on the watch of the last PC government.

The most important part about being able to afford the type of work that the Fair Hydro Act has proposed and the stretching out of the payment over our assets is to look at, what is Ontario's capacity to be able to service that money?

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Now, consider this in terms of what you take on in debt at home. When you are looking at your home mortgage, and, if you have car payments, your car payments, or if you've got loans for other purposes, be they education, be they things that you've bought for your home, most Canadian homes are spending about 160% of their annual gross income on debt servicing. Indeed, that's a high number; it's the highest in history. It's a number that Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz has said is a cause for concern.

But let's look at it in that context. Let's look at how much Ontario is spending in terms of its net debt-to-GDP ratio. How much are we spending to do our borrowing? Whereas your average Canadian home can be upwards of 160%, a number that is still rising, in Ontario, as of this year, it's 37.8% and falling. It's one of the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratios of any jurisdiction on earth, and it's going in the right direction: It's falling. In most other places in the world, it's rising, and in some cases it's rising very quickly.

Now, this bill's measures will, if passed, reduce prices right now. It does it by moving those social costs off of your electricity bill and onto the tax base. It does it while still protecting people who live in rural areas, people who live in remote areas. It does it while protecting the First Nations delivery credit. It also lowers rates while preserving measures to make electricity affordable to seniors, to low-income families and to people with assistive devices. And it does it because Ontario now has a competitive electricity market that's administered by the Independent Electricity System Operator. It's an electricity market that has come together over the last 12

or 14 years because electricity is now generated from a variety of sources, not just our nuclear and hydro.

As of today, by the way, nuclear is providing, as of this hour, 9,720 megawatts of power in Ontario; our hydro dams are providing 4,578 megawatts; gas generators right now are providing 281 megawatts; wind, 276 megawatts; solar power, 294 megawatts; and biofuel, 89 megawatts. So it continues to be that the measures that provide power for the province of Ontario are our nuclear reactors and our hydro dams. Right now, Ontario Power Generation is generating 8,512 megawatts of Ontario's total demand of some 13,789 megawatts, and that's as of about 1 o'clock this afternoon. Right now, Bruce Power is supplying about 31% of Ontario's power demand through its eight operating nuclear reactors.

Ontario Power Generation is operating 66 hydro stations which range in size from less than a megawatt—around 800 kilowatts—all the way up to 1,400 megawatts, which is larger than a Darlington reactor.

All of those projects have had a chance to be refurbished over the last 14 years. A lot of that money that it has taken, along with refurbishing more than 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines, is money that Ontario has already paid in the past. For most Ontario consumers, when a measure like the Fair Hydro Act is able to say, "For the next few years, we anticipate costs will be stable," well, you can say that with confidence because you've already spent the money and you've got a pretty good idea of how those costs are going to look, because all you're talking about is the cost of money. You're not talking about a variable of what happens if the cost of this or the cost of that is over or under, because in large measure you've already paid it and it's in the past. It's like after you've bought your house, you already know what you paid for your house, and now it's a question of what other factors will affect the demand for money as you go forward in your life within the house.

Speaker, Ontario remains the Great Lakes basin's fastest-growing region. This measure, the Fair Hydro Act, is one that will say to Ontario families that we've done the fundamentals right, and having done those fundamentals right means that you've got stable, reliable, clean and predictable electricity now and for as far into the future as we're able to project.

Speaker, I thank you very much for the time to talk about it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was interesting, listening to the Minister of Energy talk to Bill 132 and talk about interplanetary cosmic rays and neutrons.

I was somewhat puzzled at his commentary on Bill 132, the fair hydro bill. I was trying to work out why that connection was happening. I recall there was an article in the Toronto Star a couple of years ago. It was written by a convicted white-collar criminal, and it explains why Ontario should be outraged about Queen's Park's proposed sale of its stake in Hydro One. It was dated May 2015, and the headline says, "Hydro One Sell-off the 'Biggest Con Job I've Ever Seen.'"

In the story, it goes on to say, "The proposal on the table is a con job of astronomical magnitude." I thought, "There's the connection—astronomical magnitude"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't find it to be parliamentary language that you're using, so I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw, Speaker.

Anyway, the Toronto Star column of a couple of years ago and now Bill 132 on the table I think have significant connections. I think we can see through the documents.

It's interesting also, this leaked cabinet document. Look at some of the language in it. The GA smoothing option, the global adjustment smoothing option, sounds so soothing. It sounds like they're taking a lot of time to massage the words and construct something to have an appearance of what it actually isn't.

That leaked document demonstrates clearly that this is a subprime government engaged in subprime policies and putting the screws to Ontario—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to add some thought to the Fair Hydro Act. I won't address the minister's time, because I'll have time later this evening to address that.

But to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville: He started to give us a lesson on what it means to go and get a mortgage, so that you can have home ownership. What he didn't point out are some very key differences between getting a mortgage and what the government is doing with our hydro system.

First and foremost, as someone who is purchasing a property, you go in to whoever the lender may be, and you decide whether to accept the terms of that mortgage. If you don't like the terms of the mortgage, you walk away.

This is not an option with this Liberal government. The people of Ontario have no option but to go along for the ride. They had no say in the terms of this debt, this interest payment that they're going to have.

As someone going in to purchase property, you decide when to sell that property. Over 80% of the people of this province have said, "Do not sell our public hydro asset," and yet this government has forged full steam ahead down the tracks to privatize our public hydro asset.

As a homeowner, as someone purchasing a home and getting a mortgage, you decide when you want to sell that property, not the government just because they have a majority and think that they can do whatever they want in this province.

You don't make payments into something that you will never own. Now that the government has begun the privatization of this public asset, what people are doing is—in the end, within four short years, we will start to see rates go up again. But over the length of that term, they will be paying upwards of \$40 billion in interest for something they will never own. That's a big difference between purchasing a property and getting a mortgage,

and what this government is doing under this plan before us.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a delight to have about two minutes today on Bill 132.

I'd like to rename this act the Margaret McGarrity act—that's my mother-in-law—and I'll tell you why. We live in the city of Peterborough and we're served by an LDC. Our delivery charges are about \$42 a month for the LDC of Peterborough. My mother-in-law, who lives less than a kilometre—by the way, Mr. Speaker, we had her over for Mother's Day dinner in our home yesterday around 6 o'clock, and everybody enjoyed it, great time. She lives less than a kilometre from our home, but she is in the municipality of Douro-Dummer, which borders the city of Peterborough. Because she's in Douro-Dummer, she is served by Hydro One. We pay \$42 a month, and the equivalency on her bill, because she's served by Hydro One, is about \$200 a month for delivery charges. You explain this to me, because basically the electricity comes into the city of Peterborough, is served by our LDC, but for my mother-in-law, a wonderful woman, it's \$200 a month.

When I look through this bill, I can ensure my mother-in-law that that \$200 is going to be reduced by some 40% or 50%. That's important, because then I'll become her favourite son-in-law again after this bill gets passed. So that's the way we kind of look at things in Peterborough: from a very practical perspective. But I want to finish that.

The other thing about spreading costs over: I recommend the chapter in the book by Steve Paikin about Bill Davis: Nation Builder, and Not So Bland After All. I think it's at about page 178, if I remember. There's a chapter about W. Darcy McKeough, the "Duke of Kent," a great guy and a great politician. He was the Treasurer of the day. What did Mr. McKeough always recommend to Mr. Davis? Spread those costs over the long term because there's benefit for every generation.

That's why the Margaret McGarrity act, or Bill 132, should be supported.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: There's so much to talk about in such a short period of time.

The Mississauga-Streetsville member used a term, something to the effect of, "You know, it's a low interest rate. The borrowing costs you nothing, next to nothing. It's virtually free money." Well, I'm not certain how he can actually stand and tell people that when you're spending \$12 billion in interest payments, that's next to nothing.

Those people who actually are losing their schools: I don't think it's next to nothing then. Those who cannot afford to pay their hydro bill: I don't think it's nothing to them. No doctor in their community or for their family: I don't think it means nothing to them. No surgeries, or the

waiting lists that we're waiting on: I don't think it means nothing to them. Those people who are losing their businesses because of the extraordinarily high hydro rates: I don't think it means nothing to them. Or those people who can't get a job or their children can't find jobs: I don't think it's nothing to them. No mental health services for much of our province: I don't think it means nothing to them. No long-term-care beds for 26,500 people who are on a waiting list: I don't think it means nothing to them.

He talked about debt and he wanted to go back to other parties. That's probably a fair statement, Mr. Speaker, but I think he could unequivocally be honest with the people in Ontario and say their government doubled the debt in 13 years. It took the rest of our history to get to that amount of debt—\$312 billion, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Energy was talking about interplanetary cosmic rays. The only thing I can share with you there, Mr. Speaker, is that a number of my constituents have used similar terminology saying, "Are these Liberals from another planet? Do they not get it? Do they not understand what they're putting us through?"

The Minister of Agriculture just recently stood up and talked about giving families relief, giving them 40% to 50%. It's their money, Mr. Speaker. Leveraging debt over a longer period is only moving it to our pages, our next generation. It's unfathomable that they actually can stand there proudly and say that this is a good thing, when people today are still suffering. It's totally unacceptable to keep that rose-coloured-glasses mentality.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville to reply.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to reply to some of the comments here.

My colleague, good friend and hockey teammate from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is talking about what the PCs would have done because, clearly, he doesn't like what this government did, and they would have done nothing. In terms of doing nothing with your infrastructure, I can sum up the risk of that in one word, and it's a word that applies directly to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound because it happened in his riding: Walkerton. We're not going to have a power Walkerton. We're not going to have an infrastructure Walkerton. We're not going to have a Walkerton at all because, as a government, we're going to spend the money that we need to to ensure that Ontarians have clean, safe, dependable, economical, reliable power; power that not merely powers their homes but powers their economy as well. That's what we need.

The Conservative attitude has been, on infrastructure, four basic principles: (1) do nothing; (2) burn coal; (3) buy US power on the spot market; and (4), when all else fails—because when Conservatives get a chance to run the government, all else always fails—just blame the Liberals.

Although there was nothing in my speech or in the minister's regarding Hydro One, I noticed that two of the people chose to talk about Hydro One in their responses. So as long as they've opened the door, the partial sale of Hydro One means that Ontario retains absolute control of Hydro One as an entity. Hydro One is an entity that controls only 24% of Ontario's electricity market. Any notion that Hydro One makes the market is wrong and false. Any notion that Hydro One sets prices is wrong; it's false. It gives the province some \$9 billion to build what we desperately need here in the greater Toronto area, which is more means of transporting ourselves to homes, to school and to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 132 here this afternoon. The Liberals have called it the fair hydro plan. Really, there's nothing fair about this plan from the Liberals. There's nothing fair about this scheme that the Liberals have devised. Really, what this is, Mr. Speaker—it's not about providing relief to electricity customers across the province; it's all about trying to get this Liberal government elected in 2018.

First of all, before I get too deep into this, I do want to thank the whistle-blower who had the courage to provide us with the document that really exposes what this plan is. This was a whistle-blower who clearly is upset with the direction of this government—and this was just one. There are many, many people who work within the ministry and the various agencies, and those who are energy experts, who have serious and somewhat grave concerns about the state of our electricity system in the province of Ontario and the damage that has been done by this government, the mess that has been created by this government, over the last 14 years that they have been in power but, in particular, the last eight or so since the Green Energy Act has really messed up the system.

Before I get too deep into all of the bills, I will acknowledge that we did have a technical briefing on Bill 132 this morning. Unfortunately, we were left with more questions than answers after that briefing. Clearly, I believe that the government was trying to make the electricity issue disappear as quickly as they possibly could because they were falling fast in the polls. The ratings were circling the drain for the Premier and for this government. A large reason for that was because of the skyrocketing cost of electricity. The number of Ontario residents who are living in energy poverty, the number of businesses in our province that are considering moving to other jurisdictions—and, of course, many of them already have moved to other states and provinces where electricity prices are half or a third of what they are here in Ontario.

This was the result of the Liberal government—Kathleen Wynne and the Liberal government—falling fast in the polls. That was why this became an important issue for this Liberal government. Prior to that, for years, members of the opposition and members of the third party were standing in this Legislature telling stories

about energy poverty in our own ridings, and the government refused to listen. They did nothing about it until a monumental event happened in the fall of last year, when Scarborough-Rouge River, a Liberal stronghold, fell to the PCs. That was when the Liberal government finally woke up and said, "Oh, my goodness. The biggest issue at the door in Toronto is the rising cost of electricity." That is what caused this government to react—the fact that they were falling fast in the polls. Prior to that, they didn't care. They did not care that people in Bancroft and people in Owen Sound and people in northern Ontario—

Interjections.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll say again, I need to hear the person who has the floor. He has a loud voice and I can hear most of what he's saying, but when there's constant heckling from the government side, I can't hear everything he's saying. I'd ask the House to come to order.

The member for Prince Edward-Hastings has the floor.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker.

There was one reason why the government decided to react, and I think everybody in the province can clearly see why. Now they're seeing through this plan that the Minister of Energy has put forward, this fair hydro scheme. They're seeing it for what it is: It's trying to take the electricity issue off the table. It's killing them. It's absolutely killing them in the polls.

But when you dig deeper into this bill, which I will over the next hour, it exposes a lot of the failures of this legislation. It exposes a lot of the gaps in this legislation. It, again, speaks to the urgency of the government to bring something forward which wasn't well thought out, that isn't planned, because they just simply want to be able to say to the people of Ontario, "Hey, your electricity bill is a little bit cheaper." But they haven't actually fixed the underlying reasons as to why the electricity bill is soaring.

When we got that document from the whistle-blower, it showed us exactly what we thought all along: This was to get them through the 2018 election, and then, after that, the price of electricity is going to skyrocket to record highs. We'll have the return of a debt retirement charge on our electricity bills, but not just a debt retirement charge like the one we've been experiencing for the last decade or more. This one is a debt retirement charge on steroids.

The minister has come up with a new term. He calls it the clean energy adjustment, but what it is is the debt retirement charge on growth hormones. It's a huge, huge issue that's going to hit \$22 a month by 2028. That's \$22 in the debt retirement charge every month by 2028, on top of the record-high price of electricity, because the government isn't doing anything with this bill, except for making our kids and our grandkids pay the price for the mistakes that have been made over the last eight years as a result of the Green Energy Act and the last 14 years

under the mismanagement, waste and scandal of this Liberal government in Ontario.

Having got that out of the way, let's get to the actual bill. This is a bill with two schedules and eight parts. The English translation alone is 30 pages. It amends the Electricity Act, the Ontario Energy Board Act and a number of other statutes. In spite of the minister's assurances that the government is still trying to pull costs out of the system, the very text of this bill envisions that deferred costs created by this legislation will be paid by ratepayers in the years to come.

This is the third attempt by this government to seriously overhaul the electricity system since 2009. The first attempt, the Green Energy Act, is what brought us to this point. Now, before I explain how, I want to stress that you can oppose a contract without opposing a technology. They're two different things: a contract and the technology, meaning wind and solar. It's the contract we take issue with.

Paying \$1 million for a Kia says more about the buyer than it does the car. It's probably a perfectly good car, that Kia, but would you pay \$1 million for it? No. But it's a good analogy as to what happened here in the province of Ontario with the Green Energy Act. The government was warned by the Ontario Power Authority at the time the feed-in tariff program was being designed and implemented that a competitive procurement, which we had prior to the Green Energy Act, was preferable. The government was told to do a competitive procurement to keep costs down, but it decided not to.

We had other jurisdictions that we could have learned from. There are European jurisdictions that have had to terminate their tariff programs for exactly the reason that we currently face in Ontario. We have too much power at times when we don't need it. We're curtailing emissions-free power, meaning we're curtailing power that we're getting from our nuclear generators, which are emissions-free. We're curtailing power that we're getting from our hydroelectric dams, our run-of-water dams. We're curtailing that power. We're experiencing diminishing demand being driven by the recession, the increase in energy-efficient appliances and the weather.

You'll remember last May, Mr. Speaker, when the OEB came out with its rate increase. Do you remember the reason why the OEB said that the rates were increasing? They said we were going to have to start to pay more for our electricity bills because we were using less electricity. Does that make any sense in a well-managed electricity sector? Clearly, the mistake that the government has made has resulted in stupidity like that example from last May 1, when the OEB said we were going to have to pay more because we're using less. Try and figure that out. It doesn't make any sense, but it puts the blame right on this government, which has clearly made an absolute mess of our electricity sector—and they're trying to fix the problem, but they're not actually trying to fix the problem.

This February, we experienced the first load under 11,000 megawatts. That means the amount of electricity

that we actually needed was 11,000 megawatts. That's the lowest it's been since the current electricity market opened. When you're experiencing that kind of load or that kind of demand, you're running the nuclear plants and that's it. That's all you need—Ontario's nuclear plants—to meet that demand. But you're not, in Ontario, because the four months of the year when we get the most production from wind energy are the four months of the year when it does the grid the least good to have it. That would be right around now, Mr. Speaker, this time of year.

That's why, by the way, the government changed how we calculate the value of our electricity exports. It used to be that when we accounted for the price of our exports, we had to factor in the cost of production. So if you exported nuclear power at seven cents but you produced it at 6.5 cents, then you actually made a profit on that electricity. If you exported the power at three cents, like we are now, you're doing so at a loss. So we're losing money on our production and our exports of electricity when these types of things are happening. All exports are accounted for on the export transaction only. The government only reports the end result of the sale and not the general economic system impact. It should shock no one that this change to the reporting system occurred only after we began to drastically overproduce electricity when it had no market on the demand curve.

So we have high prices, excess supply, diminishing demand and fixed-term contracts put on the grid in violation of the advice of electricity planning experts. That's part of how we got to a situation where the government has to bring forward the legislation that it has brought forward in this House as of last Thursday, Bill 132. You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, when Energy Minister George Smitherman—and I saw him on the weekend, actually. Mr. Smitherman was in the Bay of Quinte riding; he was at the Trent Port Marina. We had a tribute to a former member here, Hugh O'Neil.

It was George Smitherman who actually stood in the House and said, "Don't worry. The Green Energy Act is only going to cost electricity customers"—how much?

Mr. John Yakabuski: One per cent a year.

Mr. Robert Bailey: One per cent a year.

Mr. Todd Smith: One per cent a year, is what he said.

This would all be fine if that's what it turned out to be. But against the advice of the energy experts at the OPA, against the advice of energy experts pretty much anywhere—certainly against the advice of the official opposition, led by John Tory at the time and our energy critic John Yakabuski, who warned that it was going to cost a heck of a lot more than 1% a year.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Some \$40 billion.

Mr. Todd Smith: The member says \$40 billion. That turns out to be almost exactly right. I think it's actually a little bit below what it's actually turned out to be.

But we knew back then that the government was headed down the wrong path, that this was going to create energy poverty in Ontario. Instead of 1% per year over the last seven or eight years that the Green Energy

Act has been in existence, it's been more like 400% in some parts of Ontario during that time. It's been a complete and utter disaster, but the government continued to bury its head in the sand until they started to lose a couple of by-elections like they did in Scarborough-Rouge River and Niagara West-Glanbrook. And even in Ottawa-Vanier it became an issue at the door.

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The second attempt to remake the system came last year, when the government brought in Bill 135. That bill destroyed any semblance of arm's-length governance in the sector. Since 2009, not a single energy minister has had any kind of extensive experience in the sector from an engineering or planning perspective. And that's fine; one of the virtues of representative government is that we don't elect subject-matter experts all the time. But the people we do elect should employ those subject-matter experts and should listen to them, not ignore the advice that they're receiving from them.

The biggest problem with Bill 135—and it speaks to much of the content of this bill as well—is that it broke down the hard checks in the electricity system. The board was set up to represent consumers in the electricity market by regulating the monopolies. When we have monopolies—as we do in the electricity sector—it's vitally important that the regulator be free of political interference and empowered to act on behalf of the consumer, in part because government interference in the sector has not, to this point, actually made anything better.

What we really need to do is take that cookie jar off the minister's desk so he'll keep his fingers out of it and stop messing things up, as this minister has, and the previous ministers. I think the lifespan of a Liberal energy minister has been 13 months over the last several years because they can't keep their fingers out of the pie. They keep messing it up over and over again, issuing ministerial directives—I believe we've seen close to 100 ministerial directives—from the energy minister's office. That's why we're in the mess that we're in. They just can't help themselves continuously trying to socially engineer the province.

Now we arrive at the matter that we're debating today, which is Bill 132. I want to deal first with the style of the bill. The minister was correct on Thursday when he said that it often takes a considerable amount of time to make sure that you get the details right when dealing with the electricity sector. The government would know. They would know it more than any other in the province's history. They have made electricity plans on the back of a napkin, and it has been the ratepayers of Ontario who have ended up paying the price for it.

I also know that the minister didn't announce the original plan on his own timeline. The Star broke the story of what the government was looking at in terms of electricity rate relief, and the government decided that it had to announce it quicker. The government has been facing a myriad of cabinet leaks in recent months. I can

understand why the government felt like making the announcement instead of allowing themselves to be constantly scooped until the legislation was ready. That's why we have the document that we have here today—because there are a lot of unanswered questions in it.

The night before the announcement back in March, government members were rushed into an emergency caucus meeting. They were handed a question-and-answer document on the government's plan, which was scheduled to be announced the next morning. The minister's office did—as they did again this morning—set up a technical briefing, prior to the announcement being made.

At the time, we weren't given a rough calculation of how much interest would be paid. We were told, though, that it wouldn't exceed \$1.4 billion per year. As a result, we were forced to extrapolate that per-year cost over the length of the bond. That's what this is; it's a bond that's being created. It's not a mortgage. There's no asset at the end. We don't own any more assets at the end of the amortization period than we did at the beginning. All we've done is created a way to debt-finance these contracts for 10 years in a way that shifts the burden from current ratepayers to future ratepayers—future electricity customers. That's it.

The mortgage analogy here isn't extending the one you have on your house so that you're paying it off over a longer period of time; it's a family that can't afford their mortgage, Speaker, shifting the price of paying it onto their kids, who won't have to start paying it until they take over the house. That's a better analogy.

That government likes to say a lot of things to try and explain this. They say, "Well, we're trying to match the cost to the lifetime of the assets." What assets? If they're talking about simple-cycle and combined-cycle gas turbines, then yes. Yes, you'll be able to run those over a much longer period of time. But there are other factors involved there. Gas turbines require extensive maintenance and they go through regular planned outages with the system operator. Also, the electricity cost on gas comes on the cost of the commodity at the marginal price.

The minister has said, both in his press conference last Thursday and in subsequent media interviews, that the cabinet projections on the long-term cost of this bill are subject to constant cost changes. The biggest one is the system operator's ongoing market renewal process.

Brattle accounting has said that market renewal will realize benefits of between \$2.2 billion and \$5.2 billion for the electricity market, and there are a couple of very important caveats to that. The first, if you read Brattle's report from March, is that the majority of the cost savings are going to come from the capacity auction. Close to 70% of the projected savings in market renewal is that one initiative.

The legislation defines clean energy costs in a way that includes natural gas, meaning that costs from plants that were built over the last 15 years—remember, the former Premier prior to this one used to love saying that

the government built 15 gas plants right, and just got the last two wrong. But costs from those plants, when they produce in accordance with their contracts, will be eligible to be tucked into this cost structure that they're creating as well.

All of this is important for two reasons. Over 90% of our system is fixed costs. The IESO manages over 27,000 contracts—27,000 contracts. I think that's a staggering number, for anybody who is trying to understand what exactly is happening in Ontario these days, in large part because of the feed-in-tariff program and some of the other convoluted projects that have been handed out. So over 27,000 contracts are currently on the grid, producing electricity in Ontario, ranging from wind and solar to nuclear, hydraulic and gas as well. That means a capacity market is only going to deal with a small percentage of our electricity generation, and the cost savings realized through the capacity auction, like the cost savings that are supposedly buried in this bill, are stretched over a longer period of time.

Even if the most optimistic outcome is realized and market renewal were to save \$5.2 billion over 10 years—and most projections in the March report were done for the period from 2020 to 2030—that means it's averaging \$520 million in savings every year. The system cost per year is slightly north of \$20 billion. So at the end of the day, we're talking about a 3%-per-year savings in the system on average. There are years further into the late-2020s where the cost savings are projected to exceed that, but that's all they are at this point: projections. What the minister also knows is that 91% of our gas-fired assets in the province of Ontario run for an average of three hours a day or less. They serve a few functions; they ramp up in the morning to meet the load peak, and they come on to back up the renewable generation when its intermittency becomes a factor.

So I want you to think about this for a minute: They cancelled the plant in Oakville prior to the election in 2011, and they cancelled the plant in Mississauga during the 2011 election campaign. The reason that those gas plants were slated to go in Oakville and Mississauga is because that's where the power is needed. That's where we're seeing the load grow. There's a lot of growth in the Golden Horseshoe—in Oakville and in Mississauga. Now what we have is those same power plants, those same gas plants that were cancelled in Oakville and Mississauga, being made whole by this government, in Sarnia—Lambton, my good friend's riding, and in Bath, in Lennox and Addington county, my other good friend's riding, where the power isn't needed. Now, are they happy to have the construction jobs there? Of course they are. But those gas plants are not going to run. They're not going to run. They're not going to be providing electricity in Ontario. It just speaks again to the mismanagement of this sector by this government. We could go on and on and on about the mismanagement and the waste and the scandal that's occurred within this government.

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When I was at the system operator, the IESO, headquarters—which is much like the bridge of the starship

Enterprise, I must say—standing there on the bridge and looking at the large map showing where all of the electricity was being created at all of those 27,000 different generators across the province, they told the story of Bluewater Power Distribution, which my friend from Sarnia knows well. It has so much embedded generation there that there are days in the summer when its load profile actually disappears from the system entirely and then comes back on when the sun goes down and when it's overcast. So the whole Bluewater system, because of all of the solar power that's there, actually disappears from the load.

I use this example because how clean energy costs are defined in this legislation is the first admission that I can think of where the government has had to tacitly admit that it was natural gas that has replaced much of what coal used to do in the system. These guys will stand up and they'll say that they replaced coal with wind and solar. Clearly, that's not the case.

But here's the thing: In order to have the natural gas back up the intermittent generation, they have to be running, even if they aren't producing power. It can take up to 16 hours to turn one of those gas plants on. You don't have that kind of lead time if, all of a sudden, it gets cloudy over Sarnia. They're not dealing with costs in the system, and that's the reason why the price is so high.

Another example of just how mismanaged this system is was the last long weekend we had in the province: the Easter weekend. You'll remember the Easter weekend. It was a very, very costly weekend for Ontarians—\$78 million, because of the mismanagement of our electricity sector. Not only did the government have to pay out \$28 million the Thursday night leading into Good Friday to pay off a cancelled wind producer, but it cost us \$50 million to balance the grid on the Easter weekend.

You'll remember it was mild, and the wind was blowing like crazy at times during the Easter weekend. Then the wind would stop, and the sun would come out for a while and it would be calm. It would start to rain, and then the sun would come out again, then wind would start to blow like crazy again. That causes the gas plants to pick up those spaces—the intermittency of solar and wind. When you have to constantly be peaking up gas plants, you're paying a price for that. We paid out \$50 million for electricity when demand was, I think, the third-lowest that it has ever been in the province's history, on the Easter weekend.

The minister can complain all he wants that the cabinet numbers, which were discussed in the media last week—and this is in the confidential cabinet document that we got our hands on—don't necessarily reflect efforts that are being made to take costs out of the system. But he also knows that the bond issue authorized by this legislation is going to put a massive new cost in the system, and it's a fixed cost. One of the original per-year figures given in interest costs on this bond issue was \$750 million per year as a minimum, recoverable through electricity rates.

Now there are approximately five million users on the system. What that one yearly interest payment means to

them—just that one—is a little over \$12 a month. Now, unless that interest compounds, which it has to in order for rates to be held to the rate of inflation, as the government has promised, then you pay the interest off every year.

But since it has to compound to avoid exceeding the increases the government is allowing, there are two ways of dealing with it: The first would be to make it rate-recoverable in year 5; the second would be to spread it out over the remaining period of the bond issue. It's hard to tell from the cabinet figures in the media last week which the government has decided to pick.

When talking about interest, it's important to address something that the minister mentioned last week by way of explanation for the bill's delay. It was suggested that the delay was in part the result of an attempt to secure a lower interest rate. That's a good reason to delay the legislation—it actually is—to try to get a good interest rate.

Any interest payments included in this scheme are recoverable through the rates, meaning electricity customers are going to have to pick up that cost. That means that, for the next 30 years, Ontario ratepayers—electricity customers—are going to be paying bankers on their hydro bill. Some bond traders down at Bay and Wellington are going to get very, very wealthy on this deal. The legislation even has a name for them: an “investment interest owner.”

Delving into the finances of this deal is one of the harder aspects of the bill. We're talking about a bond issue, so there is precedent for what the government intends to do here, and it has happened in other jurisdictions.

But what the government is talking about is of a size and scale that is massive in comparison to what came before it. Just for a sense of scale, according to Moody's Investors Service, approximately \$50 billion in utility stranded cost securitization bonds, which is the technical name for what we're debating here, were issued between 1997 and 2013. That's \$50 billion in this scheme in all of the United States. That's \$50 billion over 16 years in North America. The government here is attempting to issue \$27.7 billion in bonds just for this one issue.

That's the kind of mess that we're talking about here. It's important to know, because it tells you the size of the problem that this government—and it is this government. I know it's fashionable to say that governments of all parties did this, but the vast majority of fixed costs in the system now come from recent procurements that were made by this Liberal government, and it's those costs that have created the chaos in the system in Ontario.

Also, because most stranded assets securitization bonds are considerably smaller in scope, they also tend to typically do what the government is intending to do here, which is to spread the up-front capital costs incurred in the new-generation construction over a longer period of time. Because they're usually smaller, when they go on the customer bills as a repayment, the month-to-month amount is usually smaller.

But in order to make this work, you need three components, all of which are evident in Bill 132. You have to establish a property right to collect a future stream of charges that are used to retire the bond. That means that in order to set up this scheme, the government actually has to guarantee that the bond traders financing this monster are going to get repaid.

There is a slight wrinkle in directly transposing American law into Canadian law here. American law has fairly strong property rights protections in it; Canadian law largely doesn't. The government has had to largely enshrine those protections in the legislation, and it does so in a number of places: section 4, section 5(1), and throughout section 29 of the bill.

I could highlight the irony of a government as left-wing as the one across from me trying to enshrine property rights in Bill 132, to protect bond traders from the government unilaterally interfering with the entity—in this case, Ontario Power Generation—and its right to recover the costs of the bond. The legislation, as is typical of bonds of this type, includes a true-up mechanism, which basically ensures that the separate line item on bills is always enough to recover the bond. That's contained in section 15 of the bill, and it hands the power to determine the full cost recovery to the financial services manager designated by OPG.

Finally, there's the creation of an entity at Ontario Power Generation, where this thing is going to be housed for the next 30 years—

Interjection: Hid.

Mr. Todd Smith: Or hid, yes.

The first and third parts of the structure are particularly important to speak to. Our Westminster system of government is predicated on the sovereignty of Parliament and the idea that current governments do not enjoy the right to bind the hands of future ones.

Here we have an attempt, as the minister has freely admitted, to bind the hands of a future government with regard to this financing scheme. It's similar to how we structure the province's debt bonds. That's the creation of the irrevocable property right that I mentioned earlier.

What has yet to be mentioned, because those details aren't usually included in legislation, is whether the issuing of bonds is separate for each year, or if each bond in this series is part of the same transaction, regardless of when it is issued. That's an important piece, because it will give members necessary information about how restricted the financial hands will be of any future government in dealing with the mess that the current government has left us. It was described to me by one expert like this: “It's like a python trying to swallow a basketball or trying to swallow 10 or 12 Ping-Pong balls.” Obviously, if it's all at once, it is going to be a little harder to digest, and it's going to create a difficult time for governments in the future.

At the bottom of it, what we're talking about is basically subsidizing rates through debt and then, in turn, paying debt through rates. So electricity customers are the ones who get whacked.

1530

But it goes back to what I discussed earlier. This kind of securitization isn't new except in terms of scope. It's important for members to know if this \$27.7-billion debt monster is going to be processed. As yet, we have no details. The House has no sense of its year-to-year obligations in terms of the issuing of new debt in this transaction, only what the government plans are in terms of the long-term outcome. That element is necessary to understanding how this legislation will impact future Parliaments and it's central to the government's plan.

With regard to ring-fencing off the debt financing at Ontario Power Generation, I want to quote this section directly for the members. It's section 42, subsection (1.1):

"(1.1) In addition to the objects mentioned in subsection (1), the objects of Ontario Power Generation Inc. include exercising the powers and rights and performing the duties and obligations assigned to it under the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017 and engaging in activities to facilitate the implementation of that act, including entering into contracts and undertakings on behalf of financing entities and performing other services on behalf of financing entities, subject to the right to be paid by the financing entities for those services."

"Subsidiaries, etc.

"(1.2) Ontario Power Generation Inc. may create or invest in one or more subsidiaries, trusts, partnerships, limited partnerships or special purpose entities in order to more efficiently conduct its activities or achieve its objects.

"Deemed assets, non-subsidiary

"(1.3) Despite any other provision of this act, the Business Corporations Act or any other act, if a financing entity is not a subsidiary of Ontario Power Generation Inc.,

"(a) the assets and liabilities of the financing entity shall not form part of the assets and liabilities of Ontario Power Generation Inc. or any of its subsidiaries; and

"(b) the assets and liabilities of Ontario Power Generation Inc. or any of its subsidiaries shall not form part of the assets and liabilities of the financing entity.

"Deemed assets, subsidiary

"(1.4) Despite any other provision of this act, the Business Corporations Act or any other act, if a financing entity is a subsidiary of Ontario Power Generation Inc.,

"(a) the assets and liabilities of that financing entity shall not form part of the assets and liabilities of Ontario Power Generation Inc. or any of its other subsidiaries; and

"(b) the assets and liabilities of Ontario Power Generation Inc. or any of its other subsidiaries shall not form part of the assets and liabilities of that financing entity."

Now, I know there are some lawyers who are fascinated by what I just read from Bill 132. I raise it because I want to go back to an item that I mentioned in the budget motion debate about why this is being done at Ontario Power Generation. The minister stated in his initial press conference and in subsequent media inter-

views that the reason OPG is housing this debt entity is because they have the expertise necessary. That's not entirely accurate. The minister knows that this bill amends the Electricity Act to allow OPG to do this because it's never been an investment bank before. Its job has been to be a rate-regulated monopoly. If what the minister meant to imply is that OPG has experience with large projects, well, certainly we could say that's true.

Now the CEO of Ontario Power Generation, Jeff Lyash, does have experience with this kind of securitization. Duke Energy from the States, where he was before he came to Ontario, has issued what they call rate reduction bonds, which operate on the same premise as we've already detailed. But we're his employer. His expertise is readily available to us if we need it. I don't think that's sufficient reason to stash billions of dollars at Ontario Power Generation. After all, the financial services manager at Ontario Power Generation isn't stated as the CEO in the legislation; it's just stated that OPG will be the financial services manager for this debt bond.

Traditionally, we financed electricity projects in this province through the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. There exists no reason why we couldn't have done so here except, as the government outlined in the budget, the way accounting is done at Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One has separated their holdings from those of the province. So there's your "aha" moment. It gets us to an important part of this bill. If the government had financed this at the OEFC, it would have ended up on the government's books, and the government would have been responsible for it, the way the government has been for the non-utility-generation contracts signed by the NDP when they were in government. It would have blown a massive, multi-billion dollar hole in the government's so-called balanced budget—their artificially balanced budget or, as some people refer to it, their "fudge-it budget." It would have blown a hole in that so-called balanced budget.

If this debt were stashed at OEFC, it would cause the ratings agencies to review the government's current debt obligations. Typically, these bonds are asset-backed securities issued by energy distributors. This bond, however, looks like it will function more like a government-backed security, and that means the interest payments will be based on the government's borrowing rate.

If we look at comparable borrowing rates at current interest levels, we see that bonds for the government of Ontario yield around 3%, bonds for Hydro-Québec have a similar yield, and the bonds at Hydro One are a little higher at 3.5%. At the March 2 announcement, Ontario Power Generation CEO Jeff Lyash said that he originally anticipated the yield at around 5%. Now, if we're to believe the minister, part of the reason for the delay in presenting the legislation might have been to lower the yield, and therefore the interest. However, this gets us back to the question about whether the bonds are structured as one issue that gets sold over 10 years or 10 issues that get sold every year. That's going to determine what interest costs the ratepayer is on the hook for year to year.

I want to get into what this debt bond is going to cover. “Clean energy costs” are defined as follows in section 1: “means the value of the costs allocated to specified consumers as a result of the clean energy initiative, including as a result of past, present and expected costs incurred in respect of,

“(a) the amounts to be paid or reflected by the IESO in adjustments made under section 25.33 of the Electricity Act, 1998 or any provision that is the successor to that provision, which relate to contracts or amounts for,

- “(i) renewable energy generation or capacity,
- “(ii) conservation and demand management,
- “(iii) energy storage,
- “(iv) energy efficiency,

“(v) natural gas generation and capacity, excluding contracts relating to amounts payable by the IESO under section 78.2 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and excluding such other contracts as may be prescribed,

“(b) payments made or expected to be made under section 78.5 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, and

“(c) such other costs or estimated costs as may be prescribed.”

So when I asked the minister last week in the House about the fee and commission cost of this proposal, it’s because it is also rate-recoverable, meaning that electricity customers are going to have to pay more as a result of this deal and the deals that were made inside this deal to make this deal happen. And sections 1 and 20 of the bill give the minister a pretty wide latitude in terms of determining what constitutes a clean energy cost that’s eligible to be tucked into this brand new debt retirement charge on steroids that they’re creating.

I was lucky enough to get a technical briefing with the ministry staff this morning, along with my colleague from Nipissing. There are still a number of outstanding questions, answers to which the members are entitled before we vote on this piece of legislation.

For example, this morning the ministry staff were unable to tell us what the expected interest rate for this bond issue would be—this after telling us that the reason for the delay was to try and ensure a lower interest rate. So the government delayed the introduction of the bill in order to secure a lower interest rate on the bond, according to the minister, but the government can’t even ballpark what the lower interest rate may be.

Similarly, the government couldn’t tell us this morning who would be underwriting the creation of the financial product here. If the government knew or was able to tell us who was underwriting the legislation, the committee or the press could seek comment from them as to how much the expected fees and commissions would be from issuing a bond like this.

Finally, the government could not tell us at the technical briefing whether the entire asset was going to be securitized at one time or whether the securitization was going to happen in tranches, as I illustrated earlier with the whole python-and-basketball theory. That’s kind of essential. It’s kind of essential in terms of figuring out the ultimate cost of the legislation to ratepayers, to

electricity customers. The reason it’s important is because it will affect the interest rate. Under sections 1 and 20 of the legislation we’re debating right now, the minister can include those costs in the new debt retirement charge on steroids—or the clean energy adjustment, as he likes to call it.

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This, of course, is not the failing of those who gave us the technical briefing this morning. It’s not the failing of the ministry officials who briefed us on Bill 132. They’re here to do a job, and they gave us what information they had to impart to us this morning.

Clearly what you’re seeing is some turmoil when it comes to the ministry. It’s an all-hands-on-deck attitude: “The ship is sinking. How can we plug this hole?” It’s a mass scramble to try to patch things up to get us through to the next election. You’ve got bureaucrats and you’ve got ministry and political staff running in all directions, trying to throw something together to make it seem as if the government has actually fixed the problem, but they haven’t fixed the problem.

I can’t remember what the captain’s name was on the Titanic. It might have been Thibeault; I’m not sure. It might have been Thibeault. The ship is clearly hitting the iceberg and headed underwater, and the government is scrambling to do whatever they can to try to get the people into the lifeboats. But it’s not going to work this time, Mr. Speaker; the die has been cast on this government.

I had an old friend who used to say, “Fool me once, shame on me. Fool me twice, shame on you.” I said it backwards; that’s okay.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: That’s a George W. moment.

Mr. Todd Smith: That was a George W. moment. Very good, yes.

This bill raises more questions than answers. We were told again this morning, as we were previously told in the budget lock-up, that the government is injecting \$1 billion in equity in order to capitalize this plan. I just wanted to scale out on that point here. So they’ve invested \$1 billion in the budget to get this scheme started, right? The government is saying that a \$1-billion equity injection at Ontario Power Generation is enough to capitalize a \$27.7-billion bond issue.

If you thought the first part of the speech was boring, member from Etobicoke North, I’m going to do something really boring here now and talk about leverage.

Right now the Basel requirement for leverage on something like this is about 3%. A number of independent financial experts have said that 3% is too low—and it’s a red flag for them—when they stress-test Canadian banks. That \$1-billion capitalization means that this bond is leveraged at 3.6%, which once again impacts how much interest we’ll pay.

You couldn’t get a mortgage at less than 5% if you were a first-time homebuyer; you now can’t get one with less than 10%. But apparently you can capitalize the province of Ontario’s entire electricity system at 3.6%.

This is why I want to go back to what I was talking about earlier when I mentioned the fact that from 1997 to 2013 in the United States of America, only \$50 billion in stranded asset securitization bonds had been issued. We're talking about the largest single bond issue of this type, a massive debt issuance at an unknown interest rate, without knowing the total securitization or knowing who the underwriter is.

I'll take you back to that morning of March 2, when the minister and Premier Wynne stood up in the Macdonald Block and talked about their scheme. They had all of the experts there sitting down and taking questions from the media about what this plan would mean. I recall that when the CEO at OPG was asked about this, he estimated that it would take, at the least, 120 days to come up with the framework to make this happen, as it's very complicated to put this type of thing together.

As you can see, when you actually look at what has happened in other jurisdictions, this has never happened before, Mr. Speaker. We're in uncharted waters, and the Titanic is already halfway down underneath that iceberg. This government needed to put this together as quickly as they possibly could because it's about to be lights out for the Titanic. It's about to be lights out for this government. That's why they rushed this piece of legislation through and why it doesn't have the answers to these very, very important questions, like: What's the interest rate? What's the total securitization? Who is the underwriter? These questions aren't answered because this government is scrambling to try to keep their government afloat.

All of these answers are necessary to the government's plan, all of which is information that members of the Legislature should have before they vote and none of which was made available to the members either in the legislation or in technical briefings provided by the ministry. I don't think they even know the answers to these questions, Mr. Speaker.

Let's go back to section one for a second, because it's necessary to examine some of the claims that the government has made in this House.

The technical briefing this morning made reference to \$50 billion in capital improvements to the system over the last 15 years. However, ministry staff this morning admitted that 70% or more of that is actually on the generation side. So it's not improvements to the system; it's continuing to add to the problem. We've said to this government for years now, "Stop digging the hole. Stop digging the hole." The ministry staff admitted that 70% or more of the \$50 billion in capital improvements that they put on the grid are these contracts that I talked about earlier that are creating absolute chaos in the grid.

A significant amount of the remaining 30% is incurred by the transmission requirements created by adding all of the new generation, much of which is very far from the load, as I detailed earlier, where the power is being used in the province. Instead of having those gas plants in Oakville or Mississauga, or instead of having wind turbines on the Niagara Escarpment, the government has

decided to put these things all over the province where the electricity isn't needed and then, at a great cost, to provide the transmission and distribution to those projects.

It doesn't have anything to do with the lines actually running into your house, with one exception. When the Bruce-Milton line was rebuilt, we ended up with a considerable amount of 500 kV line that brings nuclear power from Bruce and wind power from Huron and Perth counties down into the load, or the growing part of Ontario, where the electricity is actually needed.

But if you want to talk about the rest of the system—and let's do that—look at any rate application from any distributor and they all say the same thing. Distributors are facing huge capital cost crunches—huge. A number of them are facing transformers, lines and poles that are nearing the end of their service life or that have already passed their service life. We had a summer a couple of years ago where we had three outages in CityPlace, right here in downtown Toronto, in the course of a single week.

The capital improvements necessary to ensure stable and reliable electricity are not keeping up with where and how the load is changing in a lot of service areas across the province. I want to quote the system operator's most recent 18-month outlook: "With the expected increase in load resulting from the proposed electrification of the GO train system, the remaining autotransformer" at Manby transmission station "could potentially be overloaded during peak load periods."

For those wondering, the peak periods in the winter are typically rush hour. So all these wonderful improvements that the government claims to have made in the electricity system still mean that electrifying the GO system would knock out power to downtown and west-end Toronto at rush hour. That's not me saying that; that's from the IESO's 18-month outlook.

Here again from that report: "High voltages in southern Ontario continue to present operational challenges during periods when the level of transfers on the 500 kV system are" low. "Temporary removal from service of at least one of the 500 kV circuits in eastern Ontario continues to be required during those periods. The situation has become especially acute during those periods when the shunt reactors at Lennox" transmission station "have been unavailable."

We also have to take a look at the electricity trading agreement with Quebec. Remember, under section 1 of this act, you can include transmission costs in the new debt retirement charge on steroids.

Let's take a look at what the system operator says about importing electricity from Hydro-Québec: "Occasionally imports from Hydro-Québec may be reduced in eastern Ontario, typically for brief periods during the summer, due to the thermal limitations of the 230 kV Hawthrone-to-Merivale circuits," in the Ottawa area—south Ottawa, to be exact—"which are part of the transmission network path between eastern Ontario and the major load centres near the GTA."

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The Council for Clean and Reliable Energy said much the same thing in its report last week: “The IESO’s analysis reflected existing plans to address the anticipated transmission constraints in the Ottawa area by 2020 and enable a 1,000-MW ... flow from Quebec within the capacity of the existing interties,” by which they mean the high-voltage direct current intertie at Ottawa. The CCRE continues: “It found that providing an additional 2,300 MW of firm import capacity across the HVDC intertie and enabling onward delivery of the resulting 3,300 MW to the greater Toronto area would cost approximately \$1.9 billion.”

If the Liberals ever tell you about the system they inherited and the improvements that they made, just start reading the IESO documents and you’ll realize that the vast majority of what they’re talking about is infrastructure that was only necessary because of the 2009 implementation of the Green Energy Act. It wasn’t about improving the reliability of the system.

The reason this is all important is because of section 1, because section 1, in conjunction with section 20, gives the minister—not Ontario Power Generation and not the Ontario Energy Board—incredible latitude in determining what constitutes a “clean energy cost.”

Here’s the other thing that we found out from this morning’s technical briefing. If rate applications by a utility are applied for by distributors and approved by the board, the variance account at the IESO ends up compensating for the entire difference in the rate increase for the next four years. The goal, apparently, was to ensure that distribution rate increases didn’t impact the total bill costs, meaning that costs incurred by a single local distribution company will now be tucked into an account at the IESO. If those costs exceed the planned costs in the year-to-year, then section 15 of this legislation empowers Ontario Power Generation to use the true-up authority that I mentioned earlier to cover the additional costs.

In addition to new generation costs and new transmission costs, we now have to add interest, fees or commissions and delayed distribution costs into the things this bond could be expected to cover.

There are a lot of questions about this legislation, Mr. Speaker. That’s what happens when you rush through a piece of legislation because you’ve been ignoring the crisis in the electricity sector as a government for years.

It wasn’t until they received a wake-up call in early September 2016 in Scarborough–Rouge River that they realized they had to scramble to do something to try and save this floundering government. It was one thing when people in rural and northern Ontario were complaining about the cost of electricity and energy poverty became a reality for people right across the province and people were losing their homes and relying on food banks more and more and relying on the social programs that the government was offering—they weren’t actually meeting the needs of people either, because electricity bills had soared from \$200 a month to \$800 a month in parts of northern and rural Ontario. We had 60,000 people who

had their electricity cut off in Ontario, and we had 600,000 people, or almost 600,000 people, who were in arrears on their electricity bills, most of them in rural and northern Ontario.

It wasn’t until it started to creep in to the 905, and even the 416 to a certain point, that the government finally realized, “We’re going to lose seats in the 905 and we’re going to lose seats in the 416 if we don’t do something to start to take this situation seriously.” People weren’t buying the talking points any more. People can buy the talking points if they’re not seeing it in their monthly hydro bill. But as soon as the people started to see in their monthly hydro bill that the cost of electricity was exploding in Ontario and that we had the fastest-rising electricity bills in North America and the largest electricity bills in much of North America—especially in the rural and northern parts of the province—they had a real problem on their hands.

So the Premier shed a tear shortly after the by-elections, last fall in Ottawa at their party convention, and she said, “We made a lot of mistakes in the electricity sector.”

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mea culpa.

Mr. Todd Smith: There was a mea culpa, but it wasn’t because people were losing their homes and people were being cut off of their electricity in the middle of winter and being forced to choose between heating and eating—and all of other social programs that our communities offer. It was because they were starting to lose Liberal seats that they reacted with this plan.

I think people of Ontario are now seeing through this Premier and realizing that she’s not who she said she was. She cares more about her own political skin than she does about the circumstances of people’s lives in Ontario. This is a desperate, desperate last-ditch effort to try and save this ship from sinking, and the people have seen it, whether it’s been through a confidential document that’s been leaked, or just their own cynical nature. We cannot support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d like to thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. He always does his homework, which I like. The government doesn’t necessarily agree with it, and I don’t agree with all of it.

Frankly, I can remember, going back to the 1990s, when I sat on council in Stoney Creek—formerly the city of Stoney Creek, now part of Hamilton. We were wrestling with hydro at that time, and I do recall that Mr. Harris and his government were trying to privatize at that time. The people of Ontario stood up and said, “No, we don’t want this,” and through political pressure Mr. Harris and his government backed down.

Unfortunately, we find ourselves in a position of an instant replay. I like to call it the TSN Turning Point. Here’s the Liberal government, at the time in opposition, criticizing Mr. Harris—and I’ll have some quotes later tonight for you from very prominent Liberals who were against privatizing hydro at the time. It’s amazing how

they've done a 180. I'll also provide some information that we may have not heard here tonight when I do my 20 minutes, which will be very enlightening to the people of this province.

I can tell you right now, Speaker, the bottom line here is: We would not be in this mess again if we had been careful and not blown money—I don't want to go through the whole list, you know the list: gas plants, Ornge, all this stuff—billions of dollars wasted. And now they're going to sell it for \$3 billion or \$4 billion or whatever the number is—a one-time sale. We bring in \$685 million a year to Hydro, so that'll be good for about three years, and after that, for the next 100 years we'll be losing almost a billion dollars a year to the private sector. That's not good business, folks; it's very bad business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Let me first of all state that my colleague and friend the member from Prince Edward-Hastings has just stood up and spoken clearly and distinctly for an hour. An hour lead-off is quite a feat, so I have to commend him on that. Now, much of what he said was problematic—it was wrong or it was conjecture—but let me just express my compliments to him.

He should be very careful, however, with the comparison between our government and the RMS Titanic, particularly in reference to the captain of the Titanic whose name he said he didn't know. Well, I have some bad news: The member for Prince Edward-Hastings and the captain of the RMS Titanic share the same name. Captain Edward Smith went down with his ship.

1600

The Ontario ship closest in analogy to the RMS Titanic was indeed the one steered by his PC Party the last time that they were in government. By contrast, Speaker, the sister ship to the RMS Titanic, that being the RMS Olympic, enjoyed a very long service life from 1911, when it was commissioned, to 1935, when it was decommissioned, being retired at Southampton. In this case, Ontario has successfully sailed the economic seas with our secure, safe, reliable and affordable Ontario energy ship.

He made a couple of comments that I just want to clarify. He suggested that there was some motive for separating the financials of Hydro One from the province of Ontario. I would remind him that Hydro One is now a publicly traded company, and they're separate for the very same reason as Air Canada and CN are separate from the federal government: because they are, indeed, independent, publicly traded companies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to stand and comment on the member for Prince Edward-Hastings. I'll tell you something, he passed on a lot of information that I found fascinating. He has certainly done his work.

There is only one thing that I would like to correct the member on, though. He said: "the turbines in Huron and Perth counties." Perth county does not have any turbines.

The reason for that is that they stood up to this government and said, "We don't want them." It cost them a bunch of money to do this and they got the project cancelled. Unfortunately, this has not happened in the rest of Ontario, where you see the proliferation of turbines under the Green Energy Act all over rural Ontario. It certainly speaks to—that this government does not listen to the folks in Ontario, especially those in rural Ontario, who said, "We don't want these things." If they had listened to the folks in rural Ontario and not gotten into this mess and put all these turbines up and green energy projects, as they call them, we perhaps would not be in the situation that we are now, where we have a broken electricity system.

Fifteen years of driving up cost to electricity rate-payers—that's not a great legacy. It's something that I sure wouldn't want to be known for. The bill also stretches 15 years of mistakes over 30 years. So we are going to put on the backs of our grandchildren and great-grandchildren the costs of your mistakes. It's certainly not a legacy that I would want to be known for, and this bill certainly is a poor way of trying to correct that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to follow my good friend from Prince Edward-Hastings this afternoon. I'm surprised he didn't once mention that he hasn't returned my book from a year and a half ago, but he has promised to do so.

Another thing he didn't mention in his hour-long address was OATs. I'm disappointed that there was no reference to the OATs missing in this bill. As I say, the lack of OATs, to me—the OATs: openness and transparency. I know someone will get it—over some heads.

We're talking about Bill 132, fair hydro. I just had to Google a definition for "fair": "Considerable though not outstanding in size or amount" or "Fair" implies a proper balance of conflicting interest." How do we measure a proper balance? If you raise hydro rates 300%—I mean, even 50% since Premier Wynne took over as Premier—then you lower it by 17% and take away the 8% tax that you used to charge on an essential service, which you should never have put on—

Mr. Wayne Gates: In the first place.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: —in the first place—thank you. When you do that, it comes down to what is fair. I would submit that when you raise rates 300% and cut them 17% plus an 8% tax that shouldn't have been there, there's nothing fair about that at all.

I say God bless to the people who come up with the titles and the names of the bills around here. Speaker, I wouldn't say it's misleading, but it's certainly not open and transparent. There are no OATs in the title of that bill, just like my friend didn't mention OATs in his hour-long speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to the members from Stoney Creek and also Mississauga-Streetsville,

Windsor—Tecumseh—who's on a search for OATs; I know where we may be able to find some barley later—and Perth—Wellington.

My friend from Perth—Wellington, much like me, also has not had wind turbines in his community. We've been very, very fortunate, because communities have had to fight against this government and all of the ill effects of the Green Energy Act to keep the turbines out. So I appreciate that as well.

The member from Windsor—Tecumseh was defining "fair," and really there is nothing fair about this fair hydro scheme that the Liberals have put forward. There is one intent of this legislation, and that's to try and make people forget, for a short period of time—during the next several months leading up to the election campaign in Ontario, they're trying to get the people of Ontario to forget about all of the mistakes that this government has made with their ill-conceived Green Energy Act. That's all what this is about.

Do you know what? If it was only going to be a couple of bucks, that would be one thing. But, Mr. Speaker, this is a \$50-billion boondoggle that the government has put before us as of last Thursday to deliberate in a very, very short period of time and then ram through the Legislature.

As I outlined throughout my time speaking this afternoon, there are way too many unanswered questions. This is not going to just cost us, as electricity customers, after the next election; our kids and our grandkids are going to be paying billions of dollars in interest because of the mistakes that have been made over the last eight years and the last 14 years by the Liberal government of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to stand up and speak about the bill before us. Always, when you're talking about a bill, it's best to understand the context within which that bill has been introduced.

The context, I think, is fairly straightforward. Hydro bills have gone up 100% over the last decade. We have a government that is floundering in the polls, as has been referenced by one of my colleagues. There was a Liberal loss in a riding that they never expected to lose: Scarborough—Rouge River. Suddenly, the crisis that was affecting people and businesses across Ontario became a crisis for the Liberal government. Until that point, it wasn't a crisis, because as long as they're fine, nothing matters.

We have a government that's facing a very unpleasant year leading up to an election that they also expect will be very unpleasant. They have to find some way of calming the waters. They have to find some way of making things look good. They have to find some way of saving their bacon. And so, Speaker, today we are discussing this bill.

This is almost a perfect Liberal energy policy, and it's perfect in a few areas. First of all, it's very expensive, which is something they seem to like. We're talking \$40

billion or more that will be spent to give the Liberals approximately four years of calm on the electricity file—four years, including the election in 2018, and, should they be successful by some strange stroke of fate, an election in 2022. So four years of peace and calm, after which point the bill comes due. Ratepayers all over Ontario will find that their bills are going up sharply, that they will have a surcharge added onto their bills—we can call it the Kathleen Wynne memorial electricity charge; take your pick—that they will be paying for decades, all so that this government can have four years in which, in their hopes and dreams, they will have some electoral success. I have to say, Speaker, that \$40 billion is a very pricey item to help the Liberals in the next election. It's a very pricey item.

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We went through this before, Speaker. You were in the House when we went through the gas plant stuff. You know when they proposed a gas plant in Oakville? I had the opportunity to stand up and tell the Minister of Energy at the time—they change so frequently, you never quite know who you're going to be talking to. But to the minister—

Hon. Jeff Leal: It was Chris Bentley.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Actually, no, not Chris Bentley—and to the Premier, saying this was a total mistake, that there was a surplus of power, that it was possible to deal with the problems in Oakville with conservation, that this was a total mistake to go forward with this.

The government didn't listen to me; nor did they listen to the people at the time. They went ahead and found that they had a number of seats that were in peril, and when seats are in peril, that is when the purse strings are loosened. That is when the wallet is opened up and the dollars shaken out so that the votes will turn up the right way in the ballot box.

I've been through this, Speaker. I've seen this happen. This is not a new phenomenon. It may be one of the most expensive I've seen so far, the most ambitious plundering of the public purse, but it is not unique. It is not something that has never been seen before around here. It's simply the scale that is different. You can qualify this or describe this as short-term gain for very long-term pain—about 26 years of long-term pain.

I've heard the minister, I've heard the Premier and I've heard government members talk about the plan before us as akin to a mortgage, and I have to say to you, Speaker, that with a mortgage you are buying a property. You pay for that property and at the end you own it. As you're well aware, in the world of Liberal privatized electricity, we don't own the assets that we're paying for.

This is much more akin to a payday loan to pay the rent: The rent's coming, and you've got to have the cash. You go down to the corner, you pledge your first and second children, you get a loan and you get to pay that rent. At the end of the day, you paid the bill, but you still don't own the unit you're living in. At the end of the day, we'll have spent tens of billions of dollars, and we still won't own that infrastructure.

There's an assumption that at the end of these private power contracts, the government, or whoever will be in charge at that time, will be able to renew them at an affordable rate. That's not always certain, Speaker. There's a big gamble that's included in all of this.

This bill is short-term gain for long-term pain. It's expensive, and it is murky. It is non-transparent, to put it as kindly as possible. The idea that Ontario Power Generation is a fund manager for all of this is, at the very least, passing strange. You may well be aware, Speaker, that the government of Ontario has other financing bodies that have expertise in these matters.

The Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., which 99% of humans in this province have never heard of, handles the debt left over from the old Ontario Hydro. It manages that debt. It buys bonds, it sells debt and it pays off debt—not very often, but it has the ability to pay off debt when it's given money. It's familiar with debt markets. It's familiar with the electricity sector. It's got an established format. It has established managers, I am sure, but it is not being used, which you have to say is very odd.

There's the Ontario Financing Authority—to my knowledge, also dealing with electricity-related debt—not being used. The Ministry of Finance, which deals with large volumes of money and has a lot of exposure to and familiarity with electricity, isn't being used. So why on earth is the Ontario Power Generation, which primarily generates power, becoming the payday loan company for this government? Now, the only thing I can think is that they're trying to move the debt off the government's books, trying to say, "No, this is not our debt; this is OPG's debt," to somehow try and make things look better. That, Speaker, is very strange. It's definitely a move to obscure reality and to make it difficult for people to figure out what's going on.

Again, as with the opposition, I had the opportunity to be briefed this morning by ministry staff, political staff, about this plan. I think they did their job credibly well. But I have to say that I asked a number of times, "Where does the Ontario Energy Board fit into this? Where does it have the hearings on the money that's going to be borrowed and the rates that will be set?" The OEB is cut out. The OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, which is supposed to protect ratepayers, is cut out of this whole process. I have to ask all of you: Really? When you have a process in which tens of billions are going to be spent and borrowed, there's no review before a public tribunal, no opportunity to ask questions about why this decision was made instead of that or why this rate is being charged instead of that rate, no opportunity for putting people on a witness stand and grilling them, under oath, about what's really going on?

So we have a plan that's expensive, that's short-term-focused and that is murky: perfect Liberal energy policy.

I want to say, Speaker—and this is not at the heart of this, but it needs to be said. I think the terms "clean energy benefit" and "clean energy adjustment" are misleading. Once again, the Liberals have determined that saying that the reason the costs are so high is because of

clean energy is extraordinarily convenient to them. Large numbers of people in Ontario understand how important it is to take on climate change and air pollution—a very big chunk of the electorate. So to say to those people, "Yes, we're going through pain so that we can deal with those issues" gives some validity to this exercise, but it is not accurate, nor is it fair.

The Conservatives go after green energy on a regular basis. Bills have gone up 100% from 2006 to 2016; 12% of our bills relates to green energy. If there had been no green energy, bills would have gone up 88% in that decade. Frankly, there may have been other charges that came in to fill that in.

Green energy has not driven the higher bills in this province. Privatization has driven it, profit has driven it, oversupply has driven it, but green energy is not the heart of it. So when the Liberals say that we're dealing with this because of green energy or clean energy, that's bunk. It's just simply that—and it poisons the well. It prejudices people against climate action and against investment in renewable energy, and it undermines the ability of the people of this province to do what's going to have to be done over the next few decades to develop new industry and to deal with the environmental problems that are before us.

This bill has many elements—and I talked about the misleading; I talked about the financing. But in every bill, there's a little golden kernel, something that speaks to the heart of why we're here and why we're dealing with all this. I want to let people know that the Ministry of Energy posted a proposal on the Regulatory Registry postings—I believe, the Ontario Energy Board. They want to make a number of amendments under the OEB Act. I'll just read it out, and I'll editorialize as I go along:

The Ministry of Energy "is proposing to amend existing regulations and introduce new ones related to electricity invoicing to implement the changes introduced by OFHPA, if passed." So they're going to change the rules around the invoices, around your hydro bills.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Again?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: When you're desperate, when you're flailing about, you try things multiple times. Hopefully, you'll hit something that will stick.

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These proposed amendments would remove outdated informational messaging from invoices—I don't know which outdated ones those are; I'm sure we'll find out—introduce new messaging requirements related to the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act initiatives, and inform customers about resultant bill impacts.

The bill that you get for hydro used to be every two months. It's now once a month, so the bill looks smaller. Thank you, Kathleen Wynne. Thank you for increasing the administrative costs that local distribution companies incur. It is now going to have—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize for interrupting, but I need to remind all members that we refer to other members by their ministry title or by their riding, not by their name.

The member for Toronto—Danforth has the floor.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate your correction, Speaker. I will refer to the Premier.

I look forward to seeing a picture of the Premier on the hydro bills—your amount, and then a picture of the Premier, with the cut that she has proposed over the next four years.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A great idea.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have no doubt you're going to do it. You're changing the laws so that you can put that in there.

Not everybody comes to this chamber with the idea that not only are they going to change the law, but they're going to make sure that they can advertise on hydro bills about it. I'm impressed. Others may not have thought of that detail, but this government does. It will be interesting to see how colourful those bills look, how much will be packed into those hydro bills. I look forward to it.

That, Speaker, is really one of the golden kernels of this bill. The idea that whatever else happens—no matter how big a debt we take on, no matter how fast bills rise after the four years of relief—remember, it's only four years. That's it, folks: 40 billion bucks, four years. It's pretty pricey. In those four years, those golden four years, we will all get to see heartwarming messages from the government about how they cut our hydro bills. All of us are looking forward to it; I have no doubt about it.

This bill won't address the fundamental issues that are facing Ontario's electricity system. Will it stop privatization? No. It won't stop it with Hydro One, it won't stop it with generation, and it won't stop it with whatever other things this government is thinking about but has not yet announced. One thing I've learned, watching them now, watching them with the sell-off of schools, watching them with the sell-off of Hydro One, the sell-off of the LCBO operations—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: No, not the LCBO.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: They will sell everything. They will sell anything, even if it's nailed down. Even if it's rooted in concrete in the ground, they will sell it off. It doesn't matter whether it's moving or not moving.

This is a government that really is a group of Tories in a hurry. These guys over here, they were pretty slow-moving when they were in power. They didn't get Hydro One sold off. They tried, but it took this government, this Premier, to sell off Hydro One. They didn't sell off LCBO operations or undermine it, but this government did. Ontario Lottery and Gaming: Who moved more and more into the private sector? This government.

Who are the great privatizers in this province? Behold, Speaker: They sit before you. Behold.

They're not going to deal with privatization. They're not going to deal with oversupply. We generate about \$2 billion a year of more power than we need—\$2 billion—and we sell it for dimes on the dollar.

I've heard energy ministers over here tell us—and I have to say, this is extraordinary chutzpah—that they're making a profit when they're selling stuff at a loss. If I buy a car and it costs me, let's say—

Mr. Paul Miller: Thirty.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll go with \$30,000; that's good advice from my colleague. If I buy it for \$30,000 and I sell it for \$10,000, have I made a profit? I don't think so. But if I was this government, I would say I'd made a profit. They have no restraint when it comes to that, no restraint whatsoever.

Speaker, I don't see this government doing what needs to be done to deal with the fundamental problems in the hydro system: privatization, oversupply, a strategy that speaks about conservation but doesn't really put it at the heart of its activities. Because of all of those failings, this bill may well give them some comfort and solace in the months leading up to the next election, but all of us, for decades to come, are going to be paying a lot of money.

So in summary, this is a borrowing scheme. It will cause prices to soar. The government doesn't get it that simply moving the soaring prices back four years doesn't help people; it just means that they're going to have higher prices further on—higher prices that will be very hard to get around.

Frankly, last week when this whole matter came up about whether or not the leaked cabinet document was real or not, the Minister of Energy talked about, "There are other numbers"; that this was not an accurate number. Well, one has to ask: Where are those numbers? What are those numbers? We'd be very interested to see those documents. I have to say, it'll be interesting to see how they stack the numbers. But if you effectively reduce prices for four years, you incur huge debt, and you have to start paying it back. It only stands to reason that that which has gone down is going to have to come up again; there's no getting around it.

I will say, Speaker, there are a few things here. First of all, this bill has almost nothing to do with electricity. It has everything to do with financial engineering. It doesn't actually get at the electricity system. What it does get at is a political problem the Liberals have. Once you understand that, once you understand that it's not really an electricity bill or a hydro bill but a financing bill, then it's much clearer as to what's really going on here—because it isn't touching on the system.

This is a system where more and more private interests are going to be intruding into the system. Let's face it: The debt that is being created will be sold off to bond markets. Those bond markets and those bondholders will have a great interest in the way that the system is working. They want to make sure that their return comes to them. Don't be surprised that what's going on with this is a deepening, a doubling-down, of the government's intent to make the system more and more private, less and less publicly controlled or controllable.

Higher costs of private debt: The idea that the debt would be hived off to Ontario Power Generation, not borrowed by the government of Ontario, opens up the likelihood that we'll be paying much more in interest than we otherwise would have been. Just so this government doesn't have to say that debt has increased on their watch, just so the government can hive it off and

try to hide it behind OPG doesn't mean that that's good for us; it means that a bad plan will be made worse. There will be less in terms of governance and ability to actually have an impact on all of this.

The Ontario Energy Board is going to be dealt out. It is going to be a minor player in all of this—minor may even overstate its ability and impact. It is the opposite of good utility regulation. Good utility regulation would have substantial matters like this brought forward to an open tribunal, again, where witnesses could be questioned, where evidence could be presented and tested. But that isn't what's going on. What's going on is large-scale borrowing to deal with a government in panic, and future governments will have to collect those debts.

Just as the Conservatives moved the debt off the nuclear power plants so that they could sell them—which they ultimately didn't do; they leased out Bruce. But I talked to people in the energy field in the late 1990s, and this was all about making the nuclear portfolio saleable, and we got stuck with that stranded debt for quite a while afterwards. It's still working its way through—something that made people crazy.

I don't know about the member from Hamilton East, but people would say to me, "Why do I have a debt retirement charge on my bill? I'm not retiring. Why am I paying that debt?" Eventually, when you have the Premier's memorial electricity surcharge, then we'll be able to say, "Well it wasn't any retirement"—well, maybe her retirement. But you're paying it because of the decision they made that is going to have a negative impact on this province for years to come.

1630

Mr. Paul Miller: Decades.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Decades; "decades" is good.

Speaker, there are alternatives. I want to talk for a bit about the Ontario NDP's plan to cut hydro prices that we brought forward a few months ago. For those who are interested, you can go to the ontariondp.ca website. It's: Pay Less. Own More. The Ontario NDP's Plan to Cut Hydro Prices. It's a useful plan. It doesn't involve borrowing \$40 billion. It does involve dealing with privatization. It does involve dealing with a number of expenses that could be used to reduce the costs that people are paying on their hydro bills.

One of the things we will do, Speaker, is return Hydro One to public hands. This government doesn't believe in this. It doesn't believe that governments should run things. They don't have any confidence in government at all—none. They have no confidence in government. They think it's a bad idea. But, in fact, Hydro One has been making money, and it is making substantial money. They're selling off an income-producing asset. No one who knows how to make money in the business world sells off a high-earning, income-producing asset. You only do that when you have to cover something over, when you've got to fill a hole. And they want to fill a hole: They've got a deficit.

This one-time source of income, this undermining of the long-term financial stability of Ontario, is completely

fine by them because they don't believe that governments should run anything anyway. They don't think they should clean roads. They don't think they should be selling alcohol. They don't think they should be doing anything. They should be out of it. It's a vision that is extraordinary for a government that, on occasion, when it's not feeling well, bills itself as progressive.

There are a number of things, Speaker, that we want to do with this. We believe that we can deliver up to 17% savings on average residential bills and as much as 32% savings for rural residential bills. One of the things that we've said is making time-of-use voluntary so that people, many of whom—new moms with young babies, seniors who are home all day long, paying peak prices? No. We would even that out. That would be roughly a 10% reduction for all those who wanted to go off time-of-use, because it hasn't actually reduced consumption that much. What it has actually done is increase the amount of money that has come out of people's pockets.

This government has talked about doing pilots or looking at it, but this measure has not actually delivered the conservation savings that were originally billed. It has meant real financial difficulty for people. We believe that that can be corrected, and it's something that we will correct.

We'll begin the process of returning Hydro One to public ownership and control. We will change the goal of our hydro assets from making profit for investors to providing power at the lowest cost consistent with paying our bills. Power at cost is something that built Ontario's economy, something that this government has abandoned because they felt the need to have the cash in hand.

We'd re-establish the transparent, independent public oversight of Hydro One by bringing back the authority of the Auditor General, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ombudsman, the Integrity Commissioner and the French Language Services Commissioner. In the period that would remain after the election, while it was still private, I'm sure that the private owners would be a bit cranky about that, but the people of Ontario believe that that sort of oversight is required, as you, Speaker, fully understand; I know that.

We'd also ensure that we would put mechanisms in law that would prevent future sell-offs of the hydro system, requiring referenda if some government wanted to sell off these critical public assets.

We believe that we could buy Hydro One back over a period of four to eight years. Having bought it back, we would be generating hundreds of millions of dollars—over years, billions—that could be used for Ontario's needs: for schools, for hospitals, for child care, for all of the things that we know we need. Those would be far more affordable if we had Hydro One, a revenue-producing asset, back in our hands.

Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer calls the sell-off of Hydro One something that will have an ongoing negative impact on budget balances from forgone net income and payments in lieu of taxes from Hydro

One. People should be aware that with the privatization of Hydro One, money that used to come to the province now goes to the federal government as income tax. Why on earth would you do that? We need that money.

People on that side—most of them—understand that. When their constituents come to them and say, “We need help with this school, this hospital, this road,” they don’t say, “We can’t do that. We don’t have enough money. Sorry, we sold off Hydro One.” No, they have to go through a whole song and dance. But selling off Hydro One undermines our financial viability.

Speaker, we have put in our plan assistance for Hydro One customers who are paying delivery costs that are significantly higher than urban customers. That unfairness is compounded by the fact that many of those rural and northern customers are heating their homes with electricity. It’s expensive. We would change the system so that rural and seasonal Hydro One distribution customers pay the same delivery costs as current Hydro One urban customers, as well as ensuring that people and businesses pay delivery only for power they use.

Right now, Ontario Power Generation pays rent to the province of Ontario for the water that goes through their dams—hundreds of millions of dollars a year. I’m sure it’s a useful income source. We would take that money and, instead of borrowing tens of billions on the debt markets, we would use those hundreds of millions a year to reduce rural delivery rates. I think it makes sense, Speaker. It would help people in rural and northern areas, no question about it, and it wouldn’t put us in a position where we were borrowing money at 5% or more and having to spend 26 years paying off debt—26 years, a long time.

We would cap private profit margins. When the Ontario Energy Board approves rate increases for privatized companies, it builds in a profit margin. It allows a company to increase rates to cover costs for new investments that include their cost of borrowing plus a 5.5% return on equity. In contrast, Manitoba’s public utility has allowed 3%, almost cutting in half the amount of profit that’s allowed on the rates for new installations.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A point of order, Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Liberals don’t want to work. We don’t have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Clerk, can we check for a quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): A quorum is not present. This will be a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): Carry on.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I think that using money that Ontario Power Generation now expends to pay for water running through its dams to reduce rural delivery

rates is a sensible solution. I think that reducing the amount of profit that LDCs or private companies—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Welcome back, Mr. Fraser—can charge is a sensible way to reduce costs.

Manitoba seems to be able to provide itself with power at a very good cost. It doesn’t seem to have an abandonment of the province by electricity generators, and yet they have much tighter controls on the profits they’re allowed.

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We would also expand the powers of the Ontario Energy Board. In 2015, the Auditor General reported specifically that the OEB was often unable to meet its mandate to protect consumers because the OEB is not authorized to review government ministry policy plans. It used to, Speaker, but the government didn’t like all that scrutiny. It rewrote the rules so the plan didn’t have to be presented for public hearings. It used to be a requirement. It’s no longer a requirement. In fact, the OEB gets cut and cut back and pushed back on an ongoing basis. In fact, in Ontario, the Ontario Energy Board doesn’t have the ability to review 65% of generation. The vast majority of generation in this province is not subject to any review by the Ontario Energy Board, which is supposed to be regulating rates, but that isn’t the case. It’s a fiction.

This government is saying all the time, “Well, we can keep rates down because Hydro One is this tough regulator who will look after things.” A tough regulator who regulates 35% of power generation in Ontario? Does that sound like a comprehensive approach to you? A regulator who gets told when it comes to smart meters, way back when, that they aren’t actually to assess the business plan, which turned out to be a real loser of a business plan? They weren’t allowed to assess that business plan; they were just given instructions to make it happen.

With the rules that came in merging the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator, the OEB was cut back further so that it couldn’t question new hydro line or transmission line projects. It could only look at how they were executed. Asking whether or not something makes sense in the first place I think is a fundamental part of regulation. This government is not interested in regulation. This is a privatizing, deregulating kind of government.

The OEB wasn’t allowed to review the sell-off of Hydro One. Frankly, Speaker, if you are responsible for protecting the people of Ontario and protecting the rates they’re operating with, that was not a small, minor sidebar decision, it was a central decision. Where was the tough regulator who was put in place to look after our rates? They were sidelined. That is the way things operate.

That needs to change. We actually need to have an Ontario Energy Board that is a regulator. I was fascinated that I had the opportunity to ask the OEB this question: What’s most troubling is that the auditor confirmed that claims made in Ontario Energy Board applications were

inaccurate, and while in testimony before committee, the chair of the Ontario Energy Board acknowledged that it doesn't verify or audit documentation submitted to the board.

I had the opportunity when I was sitting on public accounts committee to ask the head of the OEB, "Why is it that Hydro One got a rate increase from you for replacing a bunch of transformers that it never replaced, and then came back again asking for more money to replace the same transformers?" They don't check. This is extraordinary to me, that you wouldn't actually check the application to see whether or not what was put before you was true.

What was that very nice play? The Sleepy Chaperone, or The Drowsy Chaperone? We have a regulator that is dozing off. Frankly, this is a government that wants it to doze off, that slips it one or two mickeys every day and says, "Have another drink. Don't bother your pointy little regulator head about these problems. We've taken care of them. You don't have to ask any questions. You don't have to verify anything. You're just there to make things look good."

Speaker, that leads to another thing in our plan: not just having in place an effective regulator, cutting back on the profits that can be made and restoring public ownership, but using tax benefits to help ratepayers. This government gave Hydro One \$2.6 billion when it privatized it. It said, "You don't have to pay your departure tax of \$2.6 billion." There's a fight going on right now at the Ontario Energy Board about that money, with Hydro One saying, "Well, that's our money. Our investors deserve that money. Our investors are wonderful people; \$2.6 billion is a lot of wonderful. We want them to have it," and with others saying, "No, that's public money. It was a gift to you; it should be used to reduce rates."

Speaker, we see that \$2.6 billion as public money that should be used to reduce rates. Over four years that's worth 3.2% in savings. This is not a government that is actually going to go after tax gifts to benefit the people. No, it's going to borrow a ton of money that we're going to have to pay back over decades to deliver what they see as their plan.

Burying a problem in a mound of money is not a solution. It just is not. It may look pretty for a while—all those \$20 bills floating around on top of the mound—but in the end we are all going to have to pay it back.

Prior to 2010, electricity was not covered by provincial sales tax. In 2010 the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne negotiated with the federal Conservatives to add 8% in HST to our hydro bills. That was wrong, Speaker. We opposed it then; we oppose it now. We would make sure that that 8% was permanently off bills—permanently off bills.

The steps that I've talked about, Speaker—ending mandatory time-of-use, removing HST, taking back tax money that was given to private investors—would give savings in the range of 17% for residential customers. Putting money into rural and northern areas that we get

from renting water to OPG would reduce bills by up to 32%. We're not talking about borrowing tens of billions of dollars. We're not talking about four years of reduction followed by 26 years of paying. We're talking about practical things you could do to run the system more rationally so that people would have a fighting chance of being able to pay their bills.

Beyond that, obviously there are other things that have to be done. We have to deal with the oversupply. We have to end privatization. We have to have a strategy and a focus on the system that looks at making it lower-cost for customers, not higher-reward for investors and private power operators.

We need to look at a variety of things. We have too many gas-fired power plants in this province. Burning gas is a problem in terms of our climate targets. If we're serious about taking on the climate, we need to minimize the number of gas-fired power plants that are in operation. There are a number of non-utility generator contracts, 20, 30 years old, that are coming up. Each one of those we need to look at, and if we don't need them, we should be shutting them down. You're talking a lot of money there. You're talking money that will be of consequence to people who are paying their bills. But I don't hear this government talking about the need to trim that back.

We've got the Pickering nuclear power plant producing a billion dollars' worth of power a year. Remember, Speaker, we produce \$2 billion of power that we can't use, that we sell at a deep discount. A proposal was put—hundreds of millions of dollars to extend that plant further, into the mid-2020s—when we have a surplus of power. There's an opportunity here to not extend that plant to 2024 and to start decommissioning it. Put people to work decommissioning that plant, just as has been done in Germany, where plants are decommissioned within a few years of their closing.

You have very high-skilled jobs, important jobs in terms of the salaries and benefits. These are not done simply by people with a hammer whacking on concrete out there. You're talking about people who are dealing with a sophisticated operation that has to be dismantled safely and stored safely. That matters to us, Speaker. That matters a great deal.

Ending the privatization, bringing in real regulation, changing time of use, dealing with oversupply: all of those things are what we need to do to control our prices. What's proposed by this government—again, the "borrow large amounts of money and cover the problem with those amounts" is not a solution; it is a problem. It will look good leading up to the election. It will look badly after that—very badly.

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I've covered a variety of issues here and I want to talk about some of the risks that we're looking at over the next decade or decade and a half in terms of the electricity system which this plan will make even more problematic and even more difficult. Our prices have been high enough in Ontario to drive customers off the

grid. Xstrata left Timmins a number of years ago and went to Quebec because the price of power was high enough. They decided to get out.

Interestingly, about a year and a half ago, two years ago, I was sitting on a committee—I think we were dealing with the bill merging the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator—when the head of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture appeared before us talking about hydro prices. What he said was instructive. He said that at 13 cents a kilowatt hour, it is cheaper for a farmer to buy a generator, buy diesel and run that generator to provide power. And I thought, right, we are at this point where a whole bunch of people can decide to opt out of the system. It's now expensive enough that other options present themselves; not just Xstrata moving out of the province, but people and customers within the province deciding that the system is too expensive for them and looking for other alternatives.

One of the things that this government and others have noticed is how demand has flatlined, how demand for power has not zoomed up. A big part of that is conservation. Because if you can save power at six cents a kilowatt hour and you're paying 12, man, you're much better off financially to simply conserve. At a certain point though, that starts having a big impact on the whole system. It's a good thing for consumers, and we need to orient the system so that consumers can conserve a huge amount of their power. But if you don't orient the system that way, what you have are stranded assets: plants producing power that no one can afford and no one will buy.

So I am very worried—and this government should be worried—about what's come forward from OPG with the refurbishment of Darlington. They're projecting an increase in the price of power from Darlington, going up 11% a year over the next decade. For those who are curious, go to the Ontario Energy Board and look at the filings taking the price of power to 16 cents. Bruce nuclear is refurbishing. I don't think they have a magic formula that's better than OPG. They will be in the same range. So between Bruce and Darlington, about 50% or 55% of the power in Ontario is going from around six or seven cents a kilowatt hour up to 16. At that point, Speaker, it doesn't matter how much this government has borrowed. The ability to contain prices will be totally out of our hands, and the ability of people to move away from the system will be extraordinary. Not discussed a lot, not assessed a lot—I look forward to seeing the long-term energy plan to see if there is any recognition of this reality. But in New York and other parts of the American northeast, there's a recognition that as solar power becomes cheaper, the ability of people simply to abandon the system becomes very substantial.

The price of solar power has been dropping very sharply. In Mexico in the last six months, prices have come in at under three cents a kilowatt hour. Now, they've a great solar regime. It's not as sunny here. But even if we were starting to get to German prices of solar,

at nine cents a kilowatt hour, it would be very difficult for this province to sell power to homeowners, because if you're paying nine cents—sorry, if you're paying—and my aggregate bill when I factor in delivery is something like 21 cents a kilowatt hour. If you can get solar and a battery and you're down between 10 and 15 cents, you're just going to say adios to the system as a whole, and that has huge disruptive impact. Think, folks, about large telephone companies that years ago thought that mobile phones were not going to be of consequence. They rewrote the market. They completely changed the financial basis for telecommunications. That is what we're going to see with solar and battery storage in the years to come.

Wind power is dropping consistently to below seven cents a kilowatt hour. In the United States now, half of the wind installations are for private companies for their own private use. They're not for utilities. When you have companies saying, "I don't want to buy from you anymore; I'm going to generate my own power" at under seven cents a kilowatt hour, and we're charging far north of that, you start seeing a big disruption, a destabilization of the electricity system. I'm not seeing that factored into the thinking that this government has brought forward dealing with the crisis in prices that we're dealing with right now.

Speaker, to summarize, we have a plan before us that will not deal with the challenges coming towards us over the next decade. That is a huge risk to our well-being. We may be stuck with \$40 billion that can't be recovered from electricity customers, which will have to be recovered from government revenue, with all the impact that has on social services, on salaries and on our economic viability.

It's a plan that doesn't deal with the fundamental problems of privatization and oversupply. It doesn't actually give us the kind of changes that we could have if we took on privatization and oversupply.

It locks us into a very expensive, very difficult future, all for four years—four years of making this government look good. It may only make them look good for one year. We have yet to find out. We'll see in June 2018.

But Speaker, this is a bill that is profoundly problematic for the people of Ontario. I have doubt of this, no matter which document comes forward, because in the end those things that are purchased have to be paid for. The price may go down but it's going to come up sharply again. It will make hydro bills soar in the future. And just as the debt retirement charge was a burden on the back of Ontario ratepayers, this Premier's debt retirement charge will be a burden on the people and the economy of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I know that our next comment will come from our minister, who's looking forward to it.

The member for Toronto—Danforth continues to return to the theme of Hydro One, which I find rather strange, because prior to the province moving to the partial privatization of Hydro One in order to be able to fund

some of the desperately needed transit that we very much need here in the greater Toronto area, particularly even in the member's home riding, Hydro One was the company that both opposition parties loved most to hate.

The other part I find interesting is that the real stakeholders in Hydro One, the Power Workers' Union and the society of engineering professionals, are all in favour of it.

If one looks at the federal government for an example, and you take, for example, the last company of this size and scale to have been privatized at the federal level, that being CN Rail, how did that work out? Did that cause a problem in transportation? Not at all. In fact, if you had invested in CN Rail at the time of its initial public offering, that ugly duckling of a crown corporation would have given you a 2,000% return on investment. Indeed, it's now considered to be the best-run railway in North America.

Hydro One is a company that needs the discipline that the private sector, under the Ontario Securities Commission, is going to give it. Hydro One is a company that needs the oversight that the Ontario Securities Commission provides to the telecommunications sector, to the financial sector, to the manufacturing and industrial sector. That's the reason that Hydro One is better served under the umbrella of the Ontario Securities Commission and why Ontario is going to have some \$9 billion to invest in the things that we need most around this province.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I was listening to the member from the third party's speech, and he was emphasizing the oversupply and how that needs to be addressed. Of course, this bill does nothing about oversupply.

There's an interesting document called Power Exports at What Cost? It's a paper done by the Consumer Policy Institute. I would encourage the Minister of Energy to actually read it—it would be enlightening to him—instead of talking about cosmic rays and interplanetary neutrons and whatnot.

In part III, it says, "The Road Less Travelled: How Ontario Turned its Electricity Exports into a Money Loser."

"Transforming Ontario electricity exports into a money-losing endeavor for the province's ratepayers, has occurred in tandem with the Ministry of Energy assuming greater control over the electricity sector, particularly in its policies supporting new generation capacity."

In the executive summary, it says, "Since 2005, Ontario customers have unwittingly paid \$6.3 billion to cover the cost of selling the province's surplus electricity to customers in neighbouring states and provinces. Most of that bill—\$5.8 billion ... —has been incurred since 2009...." What happened in 2009? The Green Energy Act, another government initiative.

Here we continue to have a decreasing demand for electricity and, in Liberal Ontario, we have this increasing supply. Anybody in grade 9 or 10 economics knows

about supply and demand: When demand is reducing, you should also reduce the supply. These guys are backwards and out of touch and out of this world, obviously, from the minister's comments—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise and add comment to my colleague from Toronto—Danforth on this bill before us, the Fair Hydro Act, which is again—they like flowery. The government comes up with these flowery, wonderful titles for bills, yet there's very little substance to back up the titles.

My colleague had mentioned how this is like a payday loan. This is the government's version of a predatory payday loan. You have the taxpayers of Ontario that have paid to build the hydro system, they've paid yet again to upgrade the hydro system, and now that the government has privatized the hydro system, the people of this province will yet again be paying, \$40 billion. The difference is they won't own the system anymore. I mean, if that is not a predatory practice, I don't know what is.

The people of the province are paying over and over and over again for the government's mismanagement of the system. They're paying for the fact that the Conservatives started the privatization of our hydro system. The Liberals, even though they said they wouldn't sell—it's on the record; the Premier said, "We're not going to sell"—that public asset, have forged ahead and sold it. So the people of this province are paying for that.

The member from Mississauga—Streetsville went on to talk about putting money into infrastructure and schools and things like that. This was a revenue-generating asset, a public asset that they had no mandate to sell. Over 80% of the people in the province said, "Don't sell." This was something that actually made money that went into paying for schools, went into paying for hospitals, went into paying for roads and bridges. You have now sold off the majority of it. The people of this province are looking at now having you come knocking on their door again with hand out, saying, "We need more money to continue to put into our schools, bridges, hospitals etc."

It's a scheme. It's not a really good plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and speak to the debate.

I know the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington seems to be fascinated with the nuclear sector, but he doesn't recognize that, in his own riding, there are thousands of jobs that come from this sector. So maybe he should do a little investigation within the region of where these jobs are coming from.

Yes, I was talking about cosmic research that OPG is currently doing, but what about the millions of cancer patients that get their treatment from isotopes thanks to our nuclear industry in this province?

When it comes to the overall plan, the fair hydro plan, we are making sure that nuclear energy, solar energy,

wind power—everything that we have actually built in this province to ensure that we can have a reliable system that's clean and green—unlike when they were in power, making sure that the system was in tatters, that there was no investment, that we actually had to bring in power and spend \$700 million a year to make sure that we would bring in power from the US; we don't have to do that anymore.

We rebuilt the system. Now we're making sure we can make the system as affordable as possible. We're doing that through the fair hydro plan, the 25% reduction, on average, that will be brought forward to every family, every small business and farm in this province. It will come to fruition when we can see this legislation passed. This is something that we as a government recognize we need to do for the people of Ontario, to ensure that we can make it affordable, clean, reliable and green. Unlike what the opposition says, this is a plan that will work for all families.

Thank you very much. I'm happy to be a part of this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

The member for Toronto—Danforth can respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the comments from the members for Mississauga—Streetsville, Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington—have you got a shorter name there?—Windsor West and the Minister of Energy. In the end, none of the government members spoke to the fundamental problems that we face with the system—that they don't plan to address.

I was fascinated to hear the member from Mississauga—Streetsville talk about money that's going into infrastructure funding. For those on the Liberal benches, just take a look at the Trillium Trust. See what money has come out to actually be spent on infrastructure. I can tell you now, and you can have other people check it out: None has come out. The money is not going to infrastructure; the money that was supposed to go to pay down debt is not paying down debt. The \$9 billion alluded to, \$2.6 billion of that is vapourware—\$2.6 billion of that is something that you can't sell. It's not money. Goodwill, I guess, is the closest you could come to it.

We're hearing this story from the government about money being raised for the sale of Hydro One—that is not actually going to infrastructure. If it was going to infrastructure, we might have a different debate, but it's not. You should just reassure yourselves. Take a look at public accounts; they're fascinating, totally fascinating.

I also find it interesting that the Liberals, again, think that private sector discipline is preferable to good public management. I don't think people quite understand the depth of commitment to privatization that exists on this side of the chamber, but it is profound. The idea that the government couldn't actually manage Hydro One well enough, that it wasn't a properly functioning corporation, that they had to sell it off and think the Ontario Securities Commission is going to bring in that discipline so they run it well—that's indefensible. There are other words, but "indefensible" will do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with my colleague the member for Beaches—East York.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak about Bill 132. I'll talk about some of the structural issues of the electricity system in the province of Ontario. I was very curious, to my friend from Toronto—Danforth—but I will take the opportunity this Friday.

BWXT is a large company in my riding of Peterborough. BWXT, of course, is the successor company of GE Hitachi, that's very much involved in Canada's nuclear industry, and this Friday I'll have the opportunity to chat with my friends, the brothers and sisters that are members of Unifor—I will just get the member from Toronto—Danforth's comments about Canada's nuclear industry.

We should be celebrating Canada's nuclear industry. The Candu system—designed, developed and researched in the province of Ontario—is the safest nuclear transmission and generation entity in the world today. That goes without saying, and that's something we should celebrate. The Candu system is the only system of its kind that, through a robotic system, allows you to refuel the Candu system without actually shutting it down. That is a real benefit of the system that's been designed here in Canada.

1710

Two months ago, I met with the wonderful men and women who are part of Unifor in Peterborough to talk about the investment we're making in Darlington, because a lot of these very good jobs, these high-paying jobs that that group likes to talk about, the kind of jobs that pay \$30 and \$40 an hour with benefits, are located right in my riding of Peterborough.

BWXT also has a plant in Davenport, here in Ontario. They also have a plant up in Arnprior, Ontario, and of course they're also part of the old Babcock and Wilcox in Cambridge, Ontario, which is the steam turbine part of the operation. We all know that nuclear fission is used to heat water, which generates steam, which generates the turbines that spin the generators in order to make electricity in the province of Ontario.

Do I think investing in nuclear is a good option in the province of Ontario? You bet I do.

Let's talk about some other parts of the electricity system in the province of Ontario. If you take the opportunity to visit Darlington, Pickering and Bruce, you know that nuclear energy functions when it's running 100% all the time. When you try to manage the system, from time to time surpluses will be generated, so you have to deal with those surpluses. So, Mr. Speaker, take the time. Those folks at Darlington, Pickering and Bruce, will take the time to explain how the system operates when it comes to nuclear energy. Are we suggesting that we could turn off the water flowing over Sir Adam Beck in Niagara Falls, Ontario? I think not, because when you have that kind of water-driven electricity, it runs flat-out all the time. You have to manage the system, knowing

that certain parts of it are generating electricity 100% of the time, and they're most efficient when they're working 24/7.

The gas plants that were introduced in the province of Ontario to provide power are peaking plants. When there's a real need for electricity in the province of Ontario, peaker plants, which are gas plants, can be brought on stream and off stream very efficiently to address peaks and valleys. That is the reality of that side of the system when you're generating electricity: From time to time, you have to deal with the surpluses that are generated, and they're sold to our neighbours to make sure the system functions reliably and independently each and every day.

I wanted to talk about the structural side of the electricity system in Ontario.

We inherited a system in 2003 which badly needed an investment, so over the last number of years, we've invested some \$50 billion in terms of renewing the transmission system in Ontario. We know that farms, businesses etc. have to have confidence that electricity is going to be delivered to their entity, so making those investments in order to renew the system was something that just had to be done. There's a cost—you don't get that for free—so those costs had to be built into the system.

If we're talking about private power contracts—I read a book, and, Mr. Speaker, who was the author of that book? The author of the book was one Howard Hampton.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Oh.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, and it's an interesting book.

Now, Howard Hampton's book—you can buy it now for about 25 cents at any bookstore right across the province. For 25 cents, pick it up, or I'll give you my copy. It's a little worn out, but I have it. When you read Howard Hampton's book, the former member from Kenora–Rainy River talks about his private power contracts. He goes to great lengths—this is a book written by Howard Hampton, just to remind everybody here. Howard Hampton was the leader at one time, a former Minister of Natural Resources in Ontario, and wrote this lovely book called Public Power. He extolled the virtues of having private power contracts in the province of Ontario. I just wanted to get that on record. I'm sure that somebody over there will probably defend Howard Hampton. I know that at some time past, they threw poor Howard—

Mr. James J. Bradley: They cancelled the Conawapa contract.

Hon. Jeff Leal: That's right. They kind of threw poor Howard under the bus. Every time I see Howard, I remind him that his former friends gave him the old heave-ho.

I just wanted to make sure we discuss all aspects of electricity in the province of Ontario, and I wanted to make sure we got this on the record.

When you look at what we're proposing here, we're proposing to give substantive relief to virtually everybody in the province of Ontario. For example, we're

taking 25% off, a great start, and for those people like—I already talked to you about my mother-in-law earlier today. I don't want to talk about her again. I know I'm her favourite son-in-law and I don't need the extra brownie points. But I want to use her bill as a good example.

We live in the city of Peterborough. Our delivery charges are about \$42 a month. My mother-in-law is less than a kilometre away. She's serviced by Hydro One. Her delivery charges are about \$200 a month. Actually, the electricity comes right through the city of Peterborough to help service those Hydro One customers. So I'm very, very pleased that under this bill there is going to be substantive relief for those Hydro One customers.

I want to talk about my favourite topic right now: Ontario's dairy industry. I want to get on the record that—who is that guy? What's his name? Oh, Maxime Bernier. You know, Mad Max, who is running for the leadership? Max Bernier said a couple of weeks ago that supply management was a "socialist cartel." I want to bring that back to electricity, because we need a stable electricity system in the province of Ontario. Quotas on the dairy side are expanding about 6% each and every year because farmers have confidence about being in the dairy industry in the province of Ontario. In order to make that happen, we have to make sure that we have a reliable electricity system, to make sure our dairy farmers can indeed prosper in the province of Ontario.

I was on a farm last Friday—a lovely cattle farm in Timmins, Ontario. I was in North Bay, New Liskeard and Timmins. I quite like that part of Ontario. When I was talking to my friends who are in the cattle business, they were telling me they can't wait until Bill 132 is passed because they're serviced by Hydro One. They want to see that 40% to 50% discount on their electricity so that—Mr. Speaker, you'd appreciate this; you come from a farm riding—they can increase that herd. These are the kinds of things that are happening in the province of Ontario.

A week ago, I was talking to my good friends in the chicken industry. The chicken industry is expanding leaps and bounds in the province of Ontario. Again, quotas are expanding, but in order to make sure that those chicken farmers grow and supply all the markets not only here in Ontario but some export opportunities, they need a reliable electricity system. We can guarantee that. We want to try to control some of their costs at the same time, so we're going to take 40% to 50% out of the system.

It's so very, very important that I just want to cover the ag sector there and talk about dairy and chickens and cattle. Again, when I was in the New Liskeard area, a phenomenal part of the province for agriculture—again, the expansion that we're seeing there, in the dairy industry particularly. The fact is, in order to keep supporting that kind of expansion, the largest sector in Ontario's economy today—800,000 people employed there; approximately 50,000 family farms—it's all predicated on having a reliable, consistent electricity system. I'm very proud that Bill 132 is going to make that happen.

I'll now cede the floor to my friend from Beaches-East York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches-East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It also gives me great pleasure to have an opportunity to speak today to the fair hydro plan. I'm so delighted that we have got a chance now with that plan—it's in front of people and they've seen it in the first reading and now we've had a chance to have the three opening leaders—the official opposition and the third party leads on this.

We're getting the issues onto the table. They're important issues—because it is about the future of affordability of electricity in the province of Ontario, and nothing could be more important.

1720

Speaker, we've heard some of the debate today about where this all started and came from, and reference has been made to the Premier's comments at the AGM last summer. I continue to see her comments being taken completely out of context—misconstrued, as it were. Let's be very clear: When she talked about a mea culpa, she wasn't apologizing for what we have done with electricity in the province of Ontario. She was apologizing for the fact that electricity rates, as a result, have gone up in a way that has become unaffordable. It is that message of unaffordability which became the important next issue to address, not the fact that we have made these significant investments in the infrastructure of the province of Ontario.

We have gone through some of those infrastructure investments—certainly the closing of the coal plants and how critically important it was, when we had so many smog days in the province of Ontario. I remember, as a consultant to Pollution Probe, that we would do the Clean Air Commute every year. We would say that the equivalent of 400 people would die in the greater Toronto area every year because of smog-related ailments—people who found it hard to breathe, with asthma. There would be premature deaths. It was the equivalent of a jumbo jet crashing, and nobody was noticing. Those issues around respiratory disease were the direct result of coal plants in this province, and other plants; it's a loading factor. So it was critically important. One of the great successes we can point to, in closing down the coal plants, is the lack of smog days that has resulted.

We are saving lives in the province of Ontario through electricity and energy policy. I think that's an extremely important message to keep in mind: Because those coal plants are no longer operating, people's lives are being prolonged. They're not dying prematurely. But that came with a cost, so let's be very clear about it.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs spoke of the importance and the necessity of bringing in peaker plants, and gas is the acceptable technology for that currently. Gas was the measure, the mechanism, because as we brought in replacement power for coal—some of those were peaker plants—we had to replace it, and natural gas was far cleaner, far more responsive as a

peaker plant than coal was, so that was important. We invested in gas plants across the province of Ontario.

I know the member for Toronto-Danforth has a peaking gas plant in his own community. I used to live in that community. Although there were concerns from the residents, and a resistance and a reluctance to put them in—as there were in Mississauga and Oakville, with the plants that were proposed there—the reality is that those plants are operating in a way that is not causing significant local harm to the residents of those communities and, at the same time, is doing so much to provide reliable power in east Toronto. We are not suffering the kinds of blackouts, the brownouts, the power disruptions that we're seeing in western parts of Toronto because they don't have access to a distributed peaker power plant as we do in Beaches-East York and Toronto-Danforth.

I don't want us to rely too much on how much power we're generating in gas plants. There's an app, and I'm sure you all have it, and you can look and see what is being generated in the province of Ontario currently, what's being used and how it's being generated. You can go to the Gridwatch app. It's really instructive, Speaker. Right now, today, May 15, we are generating about 65% of the power needed in the province of Ontario through our nuclear plants—65% baseload. At the same time, about 30% is being generated through what was called hydro power and what we now call hydro, the water power in our province. Most certainly Niagara Falls plants and other plants—waterfall plants, Bracebridge and elsewhere—are generating upwards of 30%. So 95% of the power required in the province of Ontario right now is being generated by nuclear and water, with another 2.4% through wind and another 1.7% through solar.

If you do the math, less than 2% of the power needed right now in the province of Ontario is coming from gas. We are effectively at 98% carbon-free power generation in the province of Ontario right now, and that's an extraordinary accomplishment. We, as Canadians and as Ontarians, should be extremely proud of that fact.

We should be proud for a number of reasons. It's clean, so we're not having those respiratory impacts. It positions Ontario so uniquely for being a leader in the carbon-free economy of tomorrow. That's extraordinary. Technology companies are coming to Ontario because they know they can implement their technology here in Ontario, using surplus power to create new energy streams such as hydrogen, or possibly ammonia. The point is that you can use this surplus power to create clean power that can be used for transportation, that can be used to heat your home, that can be used in industrial manufacturing processes, and that is fossil-free. We're very excited about that possibility.

The other thing you'll know—and this is a shoulder season—is that we currently have a demand for power of about 13,600 megawatts. We hear that conservation is the solution; the reality is that we have had an extraordinarily effective impact on conservation in this province.

The most important program I want to point to is our big industrial and commercial program, where anyone initially using over two megawatts of power could apply, and we would work with them to find ways that they could reduce their demand, both peak and throughout the day, by modulating and putting technologies in place. That resulted in savings of power generation requirements equivalent to a nuclear plant: 600 to 800 megawatts of power. We've now moved that program to those who are using upwards of one megawatt, and now, in the fair hydro plan, to companies that are using 0.5 megawatts of power. That is so important, because we are having an impact on conservation.

At 13,600 megawatts, we are also generating about 15,000 in power. It is important, in a resilient system, that you generate at least 10% more than you're going to need, and we're able to do that at the moment, as I said, 98% carbon-free.

I want to talk about what I'm hearing at the doors in my riding of Beaches–East York. Some members across, in the lead for the official opposition, talked about how they're being inundated with calls, that people's hydro bills in Toronto were too high and that that was the cause to act. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. Although I admit that I do hear from people who are worried about their hydro bills, their electricity bills—we get it from Toronto Hydro. I know they are worried. They've seen it going up faster than it should, they believe. It's gone up faster than the rate of inflation. But the reality is that electricity bills in Toronto, for the most part, aren't crippling people. That's because we have the benefit of cheaper heating opportunities, typically with gas. People will come into my office and say, "My bill is up. You only gave me back \$17 in this 8% rebate." I do the quick math and say, "Okay, so it's costing you about \$200 a month in hydro."

Compare that to those in rural Ontario. That's what we were hearing in rural Ontario, where bills were \$800 and \$1,000 a month. Those were truly crippling, and it was so important that in this bill we recognized special measures to make the distribution costs unified across all of the province of Ontario. Because we are all one province, and in a fair and equitable province, all representatives in Ontario should be experiencing roughly the same distribution costs and spreading those across the social fabric, our tax base. We've made those changes, and I think that's very, very important.

We've also recognized that because people in rural Ontario don't have access to natural gas, they are either heating with fuel, heating with wood, or using a lot more electricity per square foot than we use in downtown Toronto. So although people say that the bills in Beaches–East York are higher than they would like them to be, compared to their cable bill, compared to other bills, it's not something that's becoming the most expensive item in their household.

The other thing that I'm not hearing is the kind of opposition that we are hearing to the sale of Hydro One. Yes, again, there are those who have signs up, "Stop the

sale." There are those who come to me to talk about it. But it's not the predominance of people in my riding. When I explain to people who are concerned that the monies that we are raising are going to be used to build out the infrastructure of this province—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It hasn't been used yet.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's coming. The Trillium account is there, and it's coming. We have made a \$190-billion commitment over the next 13 years, and that money will be coming from it, so we won't have to be borrowing as much. We won't be borrowing as much, because our debt-to-GDP ratio is already too high. This is our way of financing that infrastructure, and I'm delighted to be able to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

1730

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's so interesting to listen to the government side when those who speak talk about rural Ontario. We have been forgotten about for just too many years in rural Ontario, and I think that's why you see that most of rural Ontario voted for the PCs.

We had a terrible act that came into being, I think it was, in 2009, which was the Green Energy Act, in which they forced communities—if contracts were signed, they took away the planning rights of our communities, because they didn't care about rural Ontario. It caused so many problems in our communities. We had neighbours fighting neighbours. We had churches break up, split down the middle. Some people weren't welcome in churches. I heard of bullying going on in our public schools. This government kept pressing forward with these ridiculous contracts, which paid too much for the power that was generated by these turbines. Yet this government is still pursuing these ridiculous contracts, and it has raised our hydro bills way too high.

I have listened. I've had two businesses try to go on the conservation route, and their hydro bills went up. It's totally ridiculous. One business was in the small town of Milverton, a grocery store; the other one was a hotel in Stratford. They said, "What have we got to do? We're trying to get our consumption down, and they keep putting our rates up." It's totally ridiculous.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to respond to my good friends across the aisle, especially when they talk about Howard Hampton and his book on public power, which I happened to have read a couple of times. I really enjoyed it. It's very informative.

It's quite a history lesson. Our electrical grid was based on referendums in this province. They started one, two, three referendums, and it was always the question: "Should our electrical system be in private hands or public hands?" The answer every time, by an overwhelming majority: "Keep it public. Don't sell it." What do these Liberals do the first chance they get? "We're not going to sell it. Oh, we're going to change our minds. We're going to sell it." There's a history lesson to be had there.

You want a history lesson? The minister was talking about nuclear plants. Let's go back to Bill Davis and the Conservatives. When they built the Darlington plant, costs tripled, and it took two and a half times the expected timeline to build it. When they built Pickering, the costs doubled. When they tried to refurbish it, they couldn't do it all on time. It took twice as long to refurbish only some of the reactors.

Next week, I'm going up to—I say "kinkerdeen"; it's really Kincardine—to see the Bruce plant. I'm on a tour up there next Tuesday. I'm looking forward to it.

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I just hope that my friend from Beaches—East York will at least, at some point in his life, go to one of these facilities as well. He seems to know so much about it—

Mr. Randy Hillier: He is from Kincardine.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He's from Kincardine?

Mr. Randy Hillier: He is from Kincardine.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Is he really from Kincardine? I didn't know that. I thought he was the son of a Beaches—East York—his father wasn't from Beaches—East York, it seems. He told me that.

Anyway, if we're going to get a handle on the cost control on hydro, we have to keep it public and end this privatization. The minister talked about milking cows. They can't do that in off-peak hours—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased, once again, to join in the debate. Of course, I want to correct a few comments that were out there—but then again, to address what the honourable member from Beaches—East York was talking about, which I think gets overlooked a lot, and that's the elimination of coal. Yes, we, as a government, talk about that often and, yes, we think it's an important piece for us to continue to emphasize, because eliminating coal is the single-largest climate change action that we have taken in North America.

I know, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, climate change is very, very important not only to him but to all members of this House, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that. But there are many things that we have been doing as a government to ensure that we're reducing GHGs. Shutting down coal did come with a cost. But we also can't forget about the positive benefits: The Vital Signs report states very clearly that we've seen a 23% reduction in air pollution deaths and 41 % in air pollution hospitalizations. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Some \$4.3 billion in savings to our health care system. That is happening every year because of the action that we've taken to shut down coal plants.

I want to ensure that the people of Ontario recognize that we know that this came with a cost, but the cost of actually not doing something, the cost of not shutting down coal, would have been dramatic to our environment and to our health care system. So what we have done is brought forward a fair hydro plan that will help 800,000

rural families. And every single family across this province will see a 25% reduction as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Just further on some of the debate today on Bill 132, of course, Bill 132 is supposed to help people with their hydro bills. As I was listening to the minister earlier in the debate, I pulled out Hansard. I want to share with some people what the minister had to say about Bill 132: "The neutrons developed in nuclear research facilities help further our understanding of plant nutrition....

"In the field of material science, neutrons infiltrate deep inside materials and provide information about interior structures at the atomic level....

"And specific to the aerospace industry, neutrons are used to detect flaws in parts, which leads to better lifespan and the safety of aerospace-related materials. In addition, research that examines the effects of cosmic radiation on aerospace components will help inform the design of satellites, space telescopes and interplanetary space probes."

You might ask, what does that have to do with the cost of hydro bills in Ontario? How does that help the 600,000 people who are behind on their hydro bills? How does it help the 60,000 people who are disconnected from the electrical grid? I'm not sure what is going on here, but we've got to bring this back to ground control here.

He goes on: "Added to this, nuclear-produced neutrons are used to determine the composition and geological age of Canada's land masses....

The many wonders of nuclear technology never cease to amaze" the minister. Those are quotes from Hansard.

Speaker, Bill 132—has this not just become a total distraction, a crass piece of electioneering by this government, to talk about hocus-pocus neutrons, when people are trying to keep the heat on in their homes and keep the lights on in their houses?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members can respond.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to be able to respond the comments from the members for Perth—Wellington, Windsor—Tecumseh, Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington and the Minister of Energy.

What's interesting is that all members on the other side of the House are representing rural ridings, and the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington talked about the electioneering that he sees in this bill. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. The fact that this bill does such disproportionate benefit to rural Ontario, which is represented disproportionately in this House by members on the other side, is a demonstration that this is not crass electioneering. This is about helping people across the province of Ontario get energy pricing right. The whole point of energy pricing and getting it right is that you can spread over a longer period of time the costs associated with the generation of the power and the transmission, the build-out of the infrastructure.

The reality is that both parties on the other side of the House failed, as earlier vestiges of our government failed, to address the infrastructure needs of this province. We are doing that now. Because of the failures of previous generations, yes, we're going to move some of those costs over into future generations. That's the fair and righteous thing to do. But at the same time, we're also moving within this bill, Speaker, as you know, many of the social programs off the rate base and into the tax base as generally accepted ways of addressing social inequity within the province. That, too, is a righteous thing to be doing, particularly as we are doing it in a fiscally responsible way, so that we're not raising taxes to do it and we're not slashing programs to do it. We're incorporating socially responsible electricity programs into the tax base. As I say, it's a righteous thing to be doing.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand and speak on Bill 132, the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017, or as my colleague from Prince Edward county called it, the Ontario fair hydro scheme. Mr. Speaker, I'll also be sharing my time with the member from Nipissing.

What we are certain of is that this Liberal government's new hydro scheme is going to be a big hit in the pocketbooks of Ontarians, one of unprecedented proportions. The short term gain that they're professing out there, a 25% hydro-rate cut this summer, will lead to long-term pain, as shown in a leaked cabinet document. Let's not forget that this government, in their 13 years, have had those rates escalate between 200% and 400%, so I'm not even certain they can justify that it's a great thing to get 25% back when you've escalated upwards between 200% and 400%.

Let's not forget, again, that the taxpayer is going to be on the hook for this extra \$25 billion for moving it out, for deferring payment—remortgaging your mortgage, as they like to say. This is money that will not be going to other programs like health care, education, long-term care and mental health. This is money that's borrowed on the backs of our children and our grandchildren. They can spin it however they like, but someone has to pay the debt, and it's not going to be them. They have just moved it off their plate. One of my colleagues is using the term "electioneering," and I believe that that sadly is the case. This is coming out to try to say, "All is good in the world. Just take the 25%, and vote us back in again for another four years." This is deferred payment. They have done nothing to truly address the actual cause of the problem with this bill.

I'm going to go back to the document. It was marked confidential, as it was for the Liberal cabinet ministers' eyes only. It forecasts that prices will jump again in five years. My colleague from Prince Edward county, the critic for energy, thanked—as I'm going to thank—the whistleblower who actually brought that document because, in good conscience, they know is going to impact

their families, their loved ones and everyone across our great province. So I thank them for bringing it forward. It is our job to hold the government to account when we find out that there's a document out there that truly is saying that prices are going to escalate significantly after we get past this next election. It's not going to work. I certainly hope it isn't.

Rates will start rising 6.5% a year in 2022 and top out at 10.5% in 2028, when average monthly bills will hit \$215 per month. In other words, this bill will allow the Liberals to continue the mistakes of the past 14 years under their reign—a reign of terror, I might suggest, for some people—and stretch them out over the next 30 years.

In Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, people are coming up to be and asking me, "How can they do this? How can they make even more of a nightmare out of the energy file?" This used to be the strength of Ontario. We used to have the lowest rates in Confederation. We used to be the actual engine of the train when it came to electricity. Now we have the highest rates. They're trying to paint a rose-coloured-glasses picture, trying to convince people this is all going to be good. It's their money—it's your money, Mr. Speaker, and it's the taxpayers' money that is paying the freight for this train, and all they're doing is moving it out 10 years and pretending that all is good.

The document also shows that Liberals are bringing back the debt retirement charge at \$22 a month, which is four times the cost than when it was removed just a few years ago or in the last year from the bill. People were very concerned at that time about how much they were paying for a debt retirement charge and how long it was being paid for despite some of the debt already being paid back. Small businesses are still paying that debt retirement. Now, as a homeowner, as someone paying energy costs in this province, \$22 a month is what it's going to escalate to, four times the cost of what it was just recently.

As expected, the Liberals are denying any of this is true, even though it's spelled out in their secret cabinet document. The facts are the facts. The package was delivered by someone who said, "I can't not do this. In good conscience, I need to let someone else know that the government knows exactly what they're doing. This isn't in the best interests of Ontarians."

Let's talk about their hydro plans to date. Since the passing of the Green Energy Act in 2009, the Liberals have rammed through policies without any regard for the cost to electricity consumers in Ontario. We actually refer to that Green Energy Act as the bad contracts act. Since 2005, we've paid—not given away; we've paid—the United States and Quebec, other jurisdictions, \$6.3 billion to take our surplus energy, and yet we're putting more energy onto the grid. We're procuring contracts for even more energy, much of that renewable, and renewable that is intermittent. That's the big concern. When it's intermittent, you have to fire up gas to replace it when the wind doesn't blow or the sun doesn't shine.

Ironically, the Green Energy Act was brought in in 2009, and \$5.8 billion of that \$6.3 billion we've paid out for surplus energy is the result of and focused on the Green Energy Act. Over the life of those contracts, we as taxpayers, the great people of Ontario, will spend \$133 billion on the Green Energy Act. At best, at the most efficient, it's going to be 5% of our grid. It makes no sense, other than for ideology, that this government will not stand up and admit that they made a mistake, back down from it and tell the people of Ontario, "We are taking accountability and we will take our hits for this." Rather, they're trying to continue to spin as we go.

Since being elected in 2011, I have been voicing concerns from my constituents about the unaffordability of hydro in rural Ontario resulting from those bad green energy contracts that the Liberal Party has been signing since the act passed. Even when they brought out the announcement of this rate relief, the next day they entered into more contracts for wind and solar. We have too much power already, it's an intermittent source, but we're going to add to that. What do we do? We turn off collecting all the water from Ontario Power Generation down in Niagara Falls. The cleanest, greenest, freest form of energy, three cents a kilowatt approximately, we turn off and we don't collect all of it. Then we call places like our nuclear plants that have been contracted because they have a workforce, a very well-paid workforce that has huge positive impacts on our economy, and say, "Oh, don't do that. Vent the steam out, but we'll contractually pay you to do that," while they're guaranteeing access to the grid. It makes no sense. I've tried to get my head around this and I just don't understand.

Between 2006 and 2014, Ontarians paid \$37 billion extra for electricity, according to Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk. She concluded, as I've just mentioned, that we'll pay an additional \$133 billion by 2032 as a result of the global adjustment electricity fees on hydro bills. They're just playing games with some of these terms. Now they're trying to change it back to different names of what that actual adjustment is going to be.

At the end of the day, you move whatever shell on the board you want; it doesn't really matter. The people of Ontario are on the hook for all of that debt.

I want to repeat, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to probably repeat and repeat, because hopefully they'll start to listen with that. What the Liberal government said would be an increase of no more than \$1 or \$2 to Ontarians would turn out to be an overpayment of \$133 billion by 2032. It's reminiscent of when they tried to tell us that the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga would be \$40 million at the most. That was a \$1.1-billion boondoggle that, again, is not paid.

The energy minister at that time, Mr. Chiarelli from Ottawa, argued that the charges were a result of the previous Progressive Conservative government. Clearly he and their government misspoke and definitely miscalculated the hydro schemes of the day. If they have their way again, my fear is that Ontarians will continue to

pay the biggest markups in electricity pricing in the country.

While renewable energy is a speaking point for the re-election narrative, it's also very expensive for Ontarians. That Green Energy Act, Mr. Speaker, has saddled us with debt that the pages in front of you are going to pay for many, many years. As I say, it's a double-edged sword, because while you're paying all those, and we are spending all of the money we are on debt payments, then we're not putting it into things like our hospitals. They're closing 600 schools across this great province because they ran out of money. At the end of the day, that's not acceptable.

We want to ensure with bills like this that we're putting good policy in place for Ontarians, that we're addressing the challenges so that we actually have mental health services, affordable housing, hospitals that are there when we need them, medicines that are there when we need them, long-term-care facilities—26,500 seniors are waiting on long-term-care lists, and there's nothing in that budget, Mr. Speaker.

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The highest energy rates in the province of Ontario are forcing small businesses, medium businesses and large businesses out of Ontario. It's forcing people to not expand and not move to Ontario—which could create jobs for the benefit of all of us.

We need to ensure, at the end of the day, when they say the words "Ontario" and "fair," that it's truly fair to Ontario taxpayers, to the people we have the privilege to represent, and not for their re-election, not for their own need to stay in power, to cling to power at any cost. At the end of the day, this hydro rebate relief program is nothing more than short-term gain for long-term pain that they've saddled our kids and our grandkids with for many, many years in the future, and it's simply unacceptable.

Vic?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Good introduction.

The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much. I feel terrible now, interjecting. The speaker was on a roll. He had just finished quoting the Financial Accountability Officer, who, in his report, said "short-term gain for long-term pain." That's exactly what his words were, so I'll use that in a segue right into what we learned today.

I had the pleasure of attending the bill briefing this morning from the Ministry of Energy officials. I must say they did an excellent job, by the way, in terms of transferring the information to us. They did a particularly great job. It's the information that they transferred that shocked me quite a bit.

I've been in this Legislature listening to the energy minister, who continues to say, every time we ask him about something, "No, no, no. The OEB sets the rates." Well, it was fascinating, utterly fascinating, to learn that, lo and behold, sometime this summer, the rates will be lowered by the OEB exactly what the government an-

nounced last March. So who actually does set the rates? Never again, Speaker, in my opinion, can the OEB ever be “blamed” for setting the rates. This government sets the rates. They told the OEB, “You are lowering the bill by X amount,” and lo and behold, that’s the amount that they’re changing it—first, it was 8%, and now an additional 17%.

The OEB didn’t wake up one morning and say, “I think we’ll reduce the rates by 17%.” It came on the direction of this government. So when they tell us, from this point on, “We don’t set the rates; the OEB does,” we now know that none of that is true. We got the direction right here from the energy ministry people who gave us our briefing this morning.

The legislation for global adjustment refinancing requires the OEB to issue a further rate adjustment no later than a certain date—15 business days. This is exactly the wording that the government used in their handouts back in March. It was amazing that the OEB’s number, coincidentally, is precisely, to the fraction, what the minister announced way back in March.

So, no more nonsense from them anymore. The next time he says that, we’re going to have to call him to task, because he’ll need to correct his own record over and over and over.

What we also found was something—I’ll use the word “heinous,” Speaker. They did something that can only be described as heinous. The government is going to saddle OPG, Ontario Power Generation, with all these billions of dollars of financing charges. Now, you would wonder: Why would you do that to one particular company over another? Consider that we already have an authority to handle electricity financing. We already have that in place. So I was quite surprised to see that they dumped these billions upon billions of dollars into OPG. Why, Speaker? Well, if they did that—OPG does not report their debt to the province of Ontario. It wouldn’t be added to the province’s debt. That is why they have taken the unusual step of using OPG to bury the cost of this final engineering scheme of theirs. The cost is not peanuts. We’re talking about \$50 billion in brand new additional costs, as we learned from the original handout back in March from the province. This is about a \$50-billion cost to the taxpayer. It’s not “snap our fingers and make the energy file disappear.” They’re just kicking the can down the road. We’ve used all the metaphors: the shell game, and all these others.

What really is disturbing is the fact that they acknowledge that it’s \$50 billion in new costs, and they’re burying it so that the public can never see it on their debt. It is debt. This company, OPG, has to pay that money. They’re paying that money out of their cash flow, but it will never show up in the province’s books. I found that very, very heinous, that that’s what they did to try to tell the public one thing when the reality is quite stark in comparison.

They call this a “fair adjustment.” Speaker, how is it fair when, in four years, hydro will now go up more than it was ever scheduled to go up? They’re kicking this can

down the road, past the next election. This isn’t to do just with the whistle-blower documents that we received—I’ll get to those in a moment; this is just based on the briefing that we received from the ministry. This money has to be paid back. This 25% reduction—8% is equivalent to the HST rebate, so that just gets transferred to the taxpayer. You’re not really saving that money. You as a ratepayer are saving it, but you as a taxpayer now have to pay that bill.

The same thing goes for the other programs that they have, Speaker. They’re just moving it—a portion of this now just gets moved from the ratepayer to the taxpayer. They say, “Well, we’re helping vulnerable people.” But they made the people vulnerable in the first place with their ridiculous energy schemes that they had. That’s what is so problematic about this. It is not a savings of 25%. The 8% has to be paid: Instead of out of your right pocket, they’re going to take it out of your left pocket. Then there are other billions of dollars in financing programs they’re doing, the global adjustment financing—again, they’re leaving it in one pocket, but they’re going to get it out of your other pocket instead. How the heck is that any kind of a savings to you? Speaker, it’s just nonsense to even say that out loud.

Again, I talked about the fact that they’re going to help vulnerable people, but they made these people vulnerable in the first place. I know that they’re going to continue to talk about this other nonsense that I’ve heard: “We are going to smooth out these bills.” They said, “We spent \$50 billion upgrading this defunct system that had”—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It was a broken system; thank you.

The energy ministry staff told us this morning that, basically, that’s not true either, by the way. They did not spend \$50 billion fixing the system.

What they did, according to the Ministry of Energy this morning—they told us the number. I have done order paper questions for this number that got nowhere. The Premier says, in her commentary that she wrote in the Toronto Star: “We spent \$50 billion”—no, no, no. Nothing could be further from the truth. They actually spent only \$15 billion on transmission and distribution, except for the fact—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Whoa, that’s a big difference.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes. That’s from the Ministry of Energy this morning in our briefing. It’s not \$50 billion, it’s \$15 billion, and that money was not spent necessarily on new transmission lines to fix this broken system that they talk about; it was to run transmission lines far and wide, to run to these industrial wind turbines that they’ve put up all over the province, in many cases in the farthest reaches of the province and in many places inaccessible. That is the \$15 billion according to the Ministry of Energy this morning, not \$50 billion, spent on transmission and attribution.

Speaker, as I end, I just want to relay a story. We go home on Fridays, back to the ridings, and we meet with our constituents and we hear their stories. I’ve told this

story in the Legislature before, but it was just so touching and it was amazing—not in a good way—but probably one of the reasons why we are there in our constituency offices to help our constituents. We had one chap, and his power was cut off, and because of that his pipes froze, burst—water everywhere. It's going to be a rotten situation to try to figure out how to fix this for him. Speaker, this is the Ontario that this government has created. He's got burst pipes because the power was shut off. He had to shovel snow into his bathtub every night and let it melt so that he could take a bath. That's the

Ontario that this Liberal government has created—that that man has to bathe in snow water that melted because of the fact that his power was shut off and his pipes burst. That's the legacy of this Liberal government, and that is what is also just absolutely reprehensible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House is recessed until 6:45 p.m.

The House recessed from 1801 to 1845.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.





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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Premier / Première ministre
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Peter Z. Milczyn, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Julia Munro
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Wayne Gates, Amrit Mangat
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Monique Taylor, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Harinder Malhi, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Jennifer K. French, Jack MacLaren
Ted McMeekin, Lou Rinaldi
Mario Sergio, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Lorne Coe, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Clerk / Greffier: Vacant